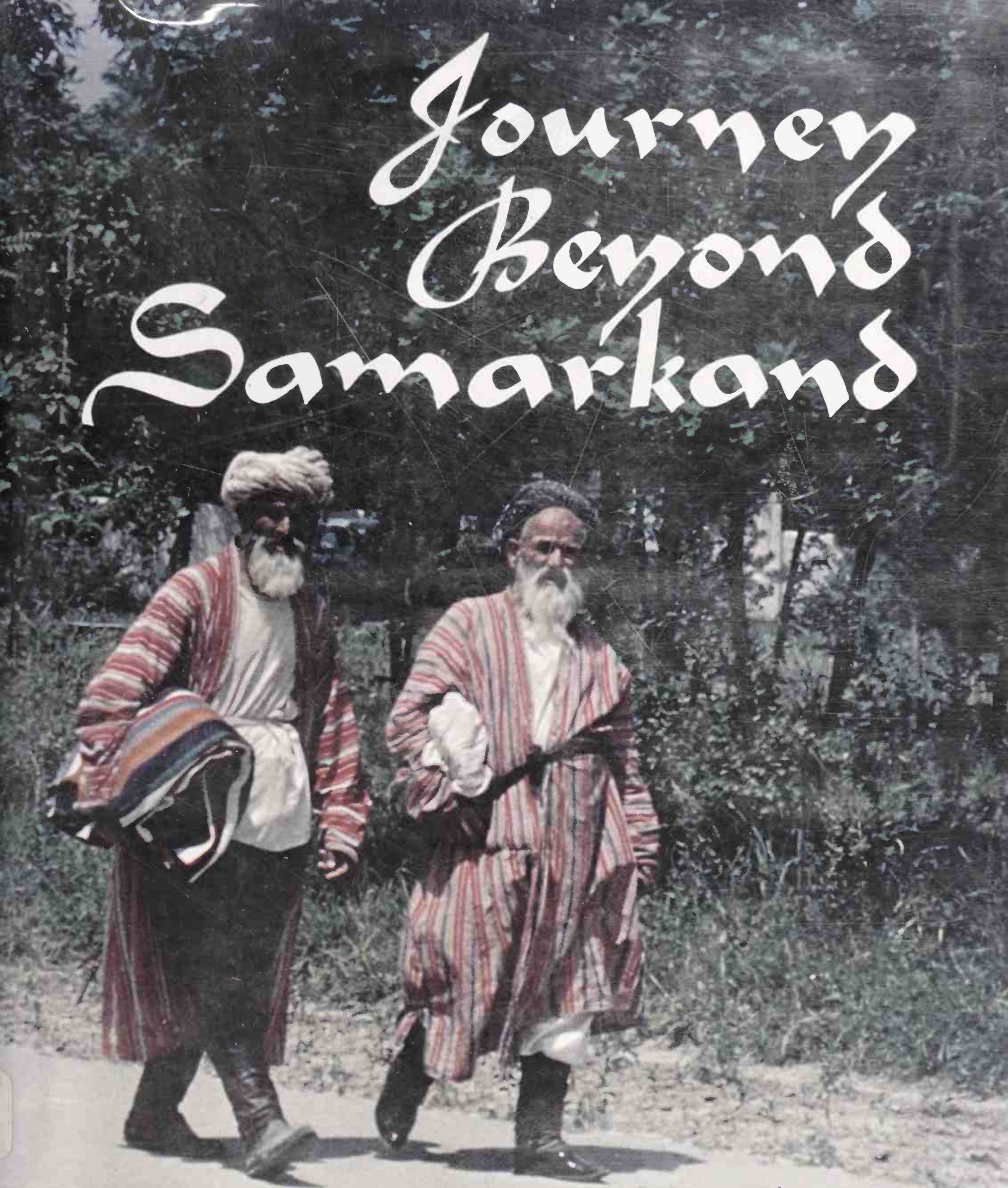
Journey Beyond Samarkand



by Yasushi Inoue

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JOURNEY BEYOND SAMARKAND

Central Asia—the land of unanswered questions, of strange adventures; the vast, age-old meeting ground of East and West. Its deserts and mountains have mothered a multitude of peoples and civilizations, now submerged beneath the sea of time. The very names of the oasis cities—Samarkand, Bukhara, Pyanjikent, Khiva—resound with the long-gone cacophony of Silk Road bazaars, the challenging cries of besieging armies, rituals and songs in forgotten languages.

The mystery of the land took on a deeper hue when the might of the Ottoman Empire closed Western access to the Silk Road for centuries. Central Asia was cut off and forgotten until, in the last century, explorers like Prejevalsky, von Lichthofen and Hedin succeeded in penetrating this closed world.

In this book one of Japan's leading novelists unveils the history of this region and the great figures of its past. Alexander the Great, Chang Ch'ien, the second-century B.C. emissary from the Chinese court, Hsüan-ts'ang, the devout Buddhist monk whose pilgrimage took sixteen years, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane and many others have molded the history and legend of the heartland of Asia.

The author's intense interest in this region, dating from his school days, resulted in his two journeys there. Here, with a vividness born of intimate acquaintance, he brings to life the vast deserts, mysterious lakes, and haunting oasis towns that have watched the ebb and flow of millennia of human history.

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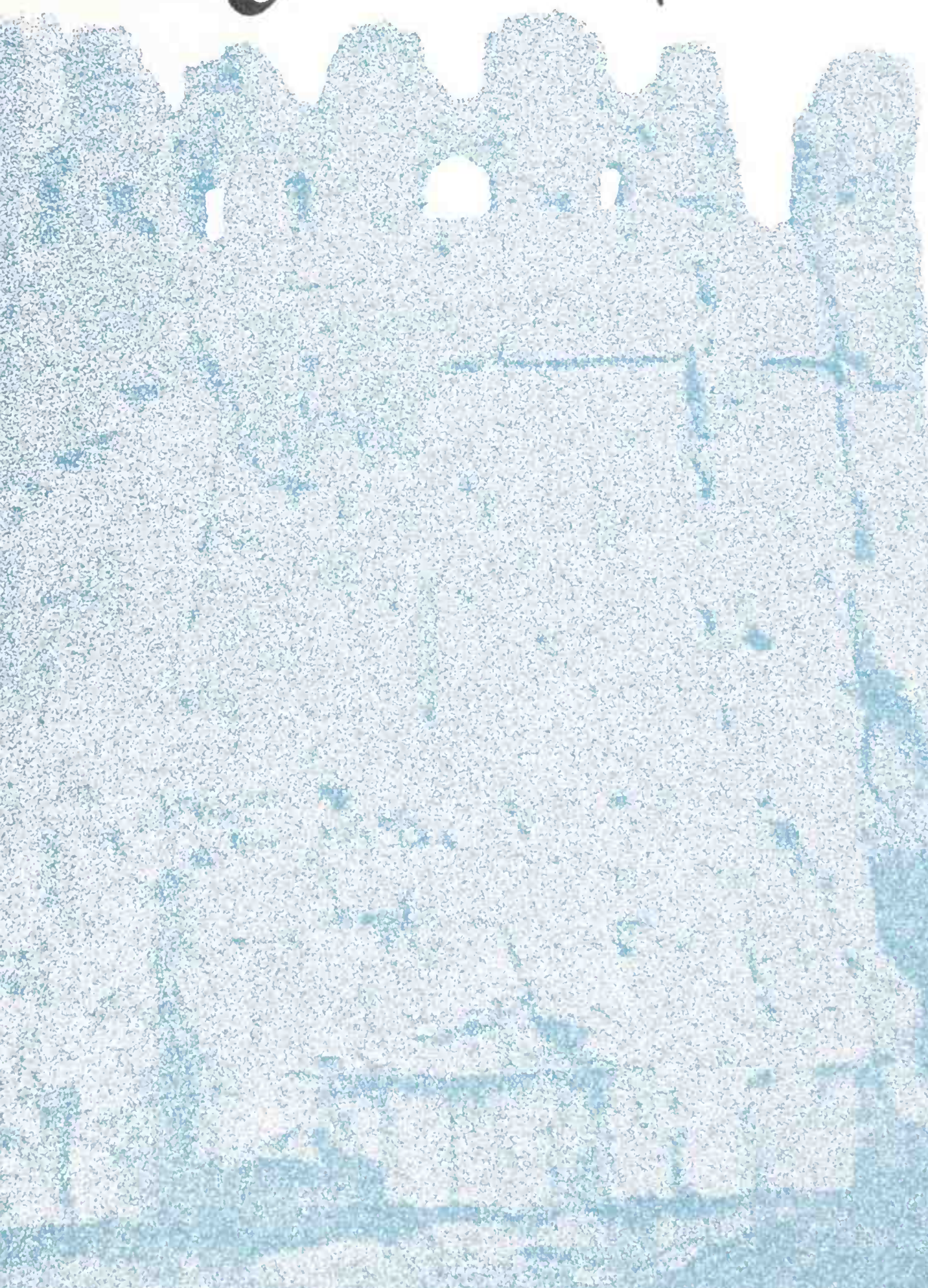
Journey Beyond



Samarkand

by Yasushi Inoue

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Introduction

When I was a student, I became fascinated by the Chinese name that is rendered in Japanese as Saiiki, or the Western Territories. It is a vague term, this Saiiki: in the ancient Chinese chronicles called the *Shih-chi*, it refers roughly to an area beyond the western frontiers where non-Chinese peoples lived. Thus, in ancient times, India and Persia were both—for the Chinese—nations of the Western Territories; it was this whole great land that lay to the west, where mysterious and alien peoples had established themselves, that the Chinese designated as Saiiki. Thus the name, initially, carried connotations of the unknown—of dreams and riddles, of unanswered questions and of strange adventures.

Only later did the name cease to be applied to India and Persia and become, what it is today, a term of reference for the vast desert area of Central Asia—an area that, for thousands of years, has been a stage across which history marched in colorful procession, a stage where many races fought for power, a stage filled with dreams and riddles, unanswered questions and strange adventures. Even today, when a line of demarcation has been drawn through Central Asia, when caravans are forbidden to move across that line from one fortified town to another, or from one oasis to another, the name Saiiki—the Western Territories—still conjures up places of mystery, dreams and riddles, unanswered questions, strange adventures.

Just now I spoke of Central Asia, but that too is a vague term, a place whose frontiers have not been fixed. Yet surely it is not unreasonable to think of it as the central area of the Asian continent, a vast land-locked

inner region extending from the Gobi Desert in the east to the Caspian Sea in the west. Not long ago this area was divided by the Pamir highlands into East and West Turkistan, but today it is divided by the political boundary between China and the Soviet Union. And today no outsider is permitted to enter what was once East Turkistan and what is now the Uighur Autonomous Region of Sinkiang of the People's Republic of China. Virtually nothing is known about life in the Region, and virtually nothing therefore can be said about it.

What is certain is that former West Turkistan—now the five Soviet Republics of Kazakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kirghizia, and Turkmenia—is but a part of the Saiiki of history. Today the ancient fortified towns and walled oases are in the process of becoming modern cities, with street after street of tall buildings. Canals have been dug into what was once barren desert, and where water has gone, belts of green have followed: desolation has given way to fertile fields. A similar metamorphosis has, one supposes, taken place on the other side of the border in what was once East Turkistan. Thus, although we may go on calling the land "the Western Territories," it is not the same land that it was.

At the same time, certain aspects of the ancient land have remained unchanged. Though belts of green now crisscross the desert, the desert is a vast area that still sprawls over the region like a huge corpse. The two great rivers, the Amu Darya and the Sir Darya (more familiar in the West as the Oxus and the Jaxartes), make their immemorial, leisurely way across the region. The giant, perpetually snow-covered peaks of the Pamir and Tien-shan ranges pierce the sky at heights of up to twenty-four thousand feet. And countless peoples still dwell there without having lost either their old language or their way of life.

One more thing, of course, has remained unchanged—and that is the history that has occured in the region. No one can rewrite history. The story of Central Asia is not like that of many other parts of the world (Japan is a good example), where power struggles have been largely interior, among people professing the same nationality. In Central Asia races from other parts of the world have met and fought for power, have met and exchanged knowledge, have met and left behind aspects of their culture and their religion. The result was giant migra-

tions—not only of peoples but of cultures and religions as well; and as we look back, we see that with every great invasion, such as that of the Greeks under Alexander or the Arabs or the Mongols, Central Asia emerged dramatically changed: each invader left behind an ineradicable scar. A human history that is almost unbelievably long has been buried under the soil, and most of it lies buried still, still a mystery to us. This vast area of Central Asia is still Saiiki to me—still a mysterious and unknown place of dreams and riddles, of unanswered questions and of strange adventures. Modern civilization has laid its ruthless hand on the region and has begun to change it into something quite different from what it was—but the Western Territories, as we know, are not so malleable as that!

I made two journeys into West Turkistan, in 1965 and 1968. In those years I visited—though briefly—many of Saiiki's fabled cities, towns, and oases: Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent, names that are an intrinsic part of Central Asian history; Ashkabad, Urgench, and Khiva, cities surrounded by desert; Dushembe, a new town hidden in a crest of the Pamirs; Andijan, Margilan, and Kokand, nestling in the Farghana basin, names familiar in the Chinese chronicles of the Ta Wan Empire; Tokmak, Ak Beshim, and Frunze, and other ancient towns lying at the foot of Tien-shan and mentioned in the travel diary and biography of Hsüan-ts'ang San-tsang.

To me one of the pleasantest aspects of traveling in Central Asia was the fact that while I was there I could think about the history of the place and see it in sharper perspective. I am, to be sure, neither a professional nor even an amateur historian; the history that I know is, so to speak, personal; the conclusions that I draw are based on the scattered bits of information that I happen to possess. Nonetheless, I found that when I was actually in Central Asia, my rudimentary knowledge took on unexpected life and vitality.

In the course of my travels through West Turkistan, I visited three historical sites recently excavated by Soviet archaelogists. One was at Pyanjikent, a Sogdian citadel whose people, when the Arabs swooped down on them around twelve hundred years ago, were forced to flee, and the deserted town was then slowly buried beneath the soil. The

second was at Ak Beshim, but excavations had only just begun when I was there; however, it was clear that the ruins dated from much the same period as Pyanjikent and like Pyanjikent had housed nomadic peoples. The third ruin, at Afrashab, was the site of ancient Samarkand. What the three had in common, and what impressed me so deeply about them, was the fact that they were all located in the highlands and that all of these indescribably beautiful places afforded views of the Tien-shan foothills. In these two respects—it seemed to me, as I stood amid the ruins—they were virtually indistinguishable. Ancient nomadic peoples, then, fled before invading armies, but wherever they fled they seemed to have chosen to pitch their tents in places that were beautifully situated and that afforded grandiose views.

Were I a historian, I should no doubt have many pertinent remarks to make as a result of my visits to these three groups of ruins; but, being a mere novelist, I have neither the learning nor the ability for such a task. Quite simply, I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the sites and by the evidence they offered of the teeming, bustling life led by an ancient, nomadic people like the Sogdians. One thing is sure: when next I meet them, Sogdians or Sakas, in history books, my mind's eye will picture them with a clarity and vitality that would have been impossible before I saw the places where they once lived.

The word *taki* means an arch and by extension means also a bazaar, since a bazaar was customarily held beneath a dome supported by arches, usually where two of the chief streets of a town crossed each other. The *taki* of Bukhara and Khiva, the best preserved of those I saw, may be taken as representative, although only that of Bukhara stood at a crossroads. At Khiva the shops stood in a single row, rather as though they were inside a tunnel.

Bukhara's bazaar has been given the name of "gem market"—a name that seemed to me, as I stood in the darkness of the interior beneath the high vaulting, through which only a faint light trickled, eminently appropriate. Although of course there are no shops there now, I could form a clear picture of a bazaar—a bazaar where once, as its name indicates, gems were bartered. I could see merchants arriving in their caravans from across the desert, and as they entered the

dark bazaar I could see the glitter of their eyes and the glitter of the precious stones they carried in their hands. Around them jostles the crowd, people belonging to varied ethnic groups, whose language, clothing, skin color, hair, all are different. Here and there, within the dark bazaar, a buyer and a seller confront each other: a stone is being talked up by one, talked down by the other. Surely, I thought as I stood in the dimness, this is a more fitting atmosphere in which to bargain for precious gemstones than the overbright, sunlit great outdoors.

The Khiva bazaar, known as a slave market, although it was not devoted exclusively to the slave trade, is somewhat brighter. At the center of the street that housed the bazaar stood a door that led to a large square where tents were pitched and camels tethered. Standing in these two marvelously well-preserved bazaars of present-day Uzbekistan, I see in my mind's eye the arrival of the merchants who have traveled enormous distances with their troops of camels. At the entrance to the town are lodgings for men and beasts. While the camels moan and complain, as is their wont, the merchants sink into exhausted sleep in tiny cubicles. The next morning, somewhat refreshed, the men make their way among the camels toward the bazaar. The most valuable merchandise, the easiest to transport and sell, is the precious stone, and the merchant who deals in gems carries his goods clutched tightly in his hand. Some are real but some, inevitably, are false: the glitter within the dimness of the market will decide the issue.

Another essential among desert peoples is a bazaar where townsfolk may buy the necessities of their daily life. Such a market is usually not covered. I visited one at Margilan, an ancient town lying in the Farghana basin, which was far and away the most animated of all such markets that I saw at Bukhara, Samarkand, and elsewhere. Fifty different ethnic groups are said to inhabit the vale of Farghana—and it seemed to me, when I visited the market at Margilan, that representatives of all fifty groups were also there. Margilan itself is a quiet town, but the market was like a maelstrom, where people of all sorts, men and women, young and old, all differently dressed and with sharply different faces, swirled and eddied dizzyingly about, bargaining at the very tops of their voices. In size, the goods that were being offered for sale

ranged from such cumbersome items as donkeys to seeds and grains. This market at Margilan, here in the very heart of Central Asia, could not, I thought, be very different from what markets have been here since time immemorial.

The minarets of Central Asia are all faced with deep blue tiles, a different blue from that of sky or sea, and it seemed to me that this blue sang a siren's song, drawing the traveler from across the desert to the gates of the fortified town, where the mosque and the minaret stood, drawing also to the heights of the minaret the eyes of travelers and townsfolk alike—almost as though the sight of this deep ceramic blue was necessary to life.

The two best-known rivers of Central Asia, as I have noted, are the Amu Darya and the Sir Darya, and they are better known to history as the Oxus and the Jaxartes (or the Saihun). They are typically desert rivers. I saw the Sir Darya upstream, where it had an enormous volume of water; this was only to be expected, inasmuch as it supplies numerous canals that now water the cotton fields of the Farghana basin; but when one observes its lower courses, as in the Kyzyl-kum Desert, one sees what appear to be little more than trickles. The reason is, of course, that as the river proceeds downstream, not only is its water evaporated by the bright sunlight but also it is absorbed by the dry desert itself and by the trees that grow beside the riverbanks. The same I found to be true of the Amu Darya, when I saw it downstream. Thus, they are altogether different from rivers that, flowing down, continue to collect water from tributaries and so grow progressively wider; desert rivers grow ever more lean and narrow.

The Zarafshan, flowing down from the heights of the Tien-shan mountains, has given rise to towns like Pyanjikent, Samarkand, and Bukhara in the oasis area of the river valley; but even the Zarafshan was said to disappear into the sands of the desert—it was the inglorious fate that awaited every desert river. Today, however, the Zarafshan is no longer permitted to follow its irresponsible course through the desert and disappear into the sand: the government of Uzbekistan has created a marvelous artificial lake that collects the waters of the river.

Horses that Sweat Blood

I

No political decisions troubled the ancient Chinese emperors so much as those relating to the Hsiung-nu. These people make their appearance in Chinese history at the end of the fourth century B.C. and closely share the destiny of China for five hundred years—until the beginning of the third century A.D. This nomadic people, dashing and chivalrous, infused the history of the Celestial Kingdom with unexpected brightness and color. It was because of the Hsiung-nu that the Chinese were forced to build the Great Wall; then, to appease the Hsiung-nu the tragic political marriage of Wang Chao-chün was arranged. But whether the Chinese chose appeasement or force, they found that the Hsiung-nu were not so easily dealt with. The very founder of the Han dynasty himself nearly lost his life when he was surrounded by a horde of Hsiung-nu during a battle.

Of all the Chinese emperors who found themselves obliged to treat with the Hsiung-nu, some softly, some forcefully, it was probably the Han dynasty's Wu Ti who (for however short a time) best succeeded in pushing the Hsiung-nu away from the Chinese border by dispatching an expeditionary force. Wei Ch'ing and Huo Chü-ping are remembered in history as great generals because they won brilliant victories in battles against the Hsiung-nu. And the fact that—literally—an epoch-making chapter in the history of East-West relations was written during the reign of this same Wu Ti is also due to the Hsiung-nu.

Once there was a prisoner who was heard to say: "The lord of the Hsiung-nu has attacked the Yüeh-chih people and has captured their king, and he has made a fine, handsome cup out of the king's skull,

which he drinks from. Since hearing this, the Yüeh-chih have borne a bitter grudge against the Hsiung-nu, and for that reason they are looking for allies to help them fight the Hsiung-nu but so far have not found any. And their anger grows. Such, at any rate, is the rumor that I have heard."

At last these words reached the ears of Wu Ti, who, the moment he heard them, decided to ally himself with the Yüeh-chih. He was the kind of man who, once he had made a decision, would do everything necessary to carry it out, no matter what the cost. He therefore made a public announcement of his intention and asked for a volunteer to take a message to the Yüeh-chih telling them what he had decided. But no one knew with any precision what the Yüeh-chih were like or how far their land lay from China; all that anyone knew was that, leaving the west gate (the Jade Gate), one journeyed far to the west until one reached an unknown world, called simply the Western Territories, and there lay the land of the Yüeh-chih, but no one knew exactly how far or how large it was—or indeed anything else about it.

Several days after Wu Ti's announcement, a list of all volunteers who had applied for the job of messenger was drawn up. But how to choose the right man posed a problem, for it goes without saying that any who volunteered were by nature reckless adventurers, so all the information they gave about themselves was necessarily suspect. However, among those who had volunteered for the mission was a minor official who served in the imperial palace. His name was Chang Ch'ien.

As soon as Wu Ti learned of this, he summoned him to an audience. Chang Ch'ien appeared to be about thirty years old; he had wide eyes, and he looked both tough and determined. To him Wu Ti said: "You want to go on a mission to the Yüeh-chih—but do you know anything about them?"

"I know nothing at all," Chang Ch'ien replied.

"How many years do you expect your journey will take?"

"I have no idea, Your Majesty."

"The journey is perilous and you may never return. You realize that, don't you?"

"I do, but as Your Majesty has called for a messenger, someone must

answer the call, and I thought perhaps I was more suitable than others who might volunteer."

This answer pleased Wu Ti.

Accordingly, accompanied by a retinue of a hundred servants, Chang Ch'ien departed for the unknown land, the Western Territories. Neither his exact age at the time nor the exact year of his departure is known to history. On these points the ancient chronicles are silent, but a medieval history of the emperors of China estimates the year of departure as 139 B.C.

Thirteen years later, after Wu Ti had forgotten all about the mission, Chang Ch'ien returned, accompanied only by his Hsiung-nu wife and by Hsiung-nu servants. Then he told Wu Ti what had befallen him during those years. Almost immediately upon leaving the Jade Gate, he had been captured by the Hsiung-nu and had spent ten years as their prisoner, during which time he married and had children. At last, after a whole decade had passed, the vigilance of his captors relaxed and Chang Ch'ien seized the opportunity to escape, accompanied by his retinue. After passing through vast deserts, he finally reached his original destination, Ta Yüeh-chih, but there he found that the old king had been killed by the Hsiung-nu and in his place sat his son. The young king made it clear at once that he had no desire either to go to war against the Hsiung-nu or to enter into an alliance with the Han emperor. So Chang Ch'ien began his journey back. On the way he was captured once again, and before he finally reached home he underwent great suffering.

Though Chang Ch'ien had failed to effect a military alliance, which was the chief purpose of his mission, Wu Ti was nonetheless fascinated by the stories he told of his strange journey. "After I escaped from the Hsiung-nu," Chang Ch'ien said, "I passed through a land named Ta Wan on my way to Ta Yüeh-chih. Ta Wan lies to the southwest of the Hsiung-nu and ten thousand *li* west of the land of Han. There the people live off the soil, they plant rice and barley, they grow fruit trees, and the wine they produce is splendid beyond description.

"And I must tell Your Majesty also," Chang Ch'ien continued, "about the horses of Ta Wan. They are strange horses, unlike any you

have ever seen, for they sweat blood. And in other respects no other horse can compete with them: they are majestic in appearance, their hair is like silk, they are so clever they understand what men are thinking, and without difficulty they can gallop a thousand *li* a day. Now the population of that country is several hundred thousand, and there are seventy citadels of different sizes. The soldiers, being good riders and good shots as well, make superb cavalrymen, especially since the horses they ride are beyond all comparison. The people call them 'blood-sweating horses,' " repeated Chang Ch'ien, and then he spoke of many lands that Wu Ti had never heard of: K'ang Chü to the north of Ta Wan, Ta Yüeh-chih in the west, Ta Hsia to the southwest, Wu Sung in the northeast, and Kan Mi and Kan T'ien in the east. Inasmuch as Chang Ch'ien had not ventured beyond Ta Yüeh-chih, it is apparent that his reports about lands other than Ta Wan, K'ang Chü, and Ta Yüeh-chih must have been secondhand.

Wu Ti, as Chang Ch'ien spoke, grew more and more excited; his brain teemed with rich and exciting possibilities and with dreams about great countries where unknown and alien peoples dwelt. He was determined to procure all the rare goods produced in those distant lands—but most of all he was intrigued by the horses of Ta Wan, for he had never heard of blood-sweating horses, and if they were indeed the greatest horses in the world, then nothing would do but that he must have some. His dream of defeating the Hsiung-nu by forming a military alliance with Ta Yüeh-chih was not destined to be fulfilled, but now he had a new dream and, he thought, a better one: to defeat the Hsiung-nu by making use of the invincible horses of Ta Wan.

This Ta Wan that Chang Ch'ien spoke about was the land of a people established in the Farghana basin of present-day Uzbekistan; K'ang Chü lay in present-day Kirghizia; and Ta Yüeh-chih, to which he journeyed at Wu Ti's command, was to be found east of Bukhara. Thus Chang Ch'ien, the first man to report on Saiiki, has become an immortal name in Oriental history. His journey was indeed remarkable: after leaving the Jade Gate, he crossed the Takla-makan Desert in East Turkistan and then traversed the roof of Asia, Tien-shan and the Pamirs, in order to reach West Turkistan. He made use of the

southern route around the Tien-shan range; there was also a route around the north foot of Tien-shan and still another route that cut across the southern edge of the desert: the three main roads between China and Turkistan. In any case, what Chang Ch'ien had done was to make the astonishing journey across Central Asia, passing through both present-day Chinese East Turkistan and Soviet West Turkistan. He richly deserves a place in history not only as a great adventurer but as a great explorer as well.

The three routes I have just mentioned all enter West Turkistan by way of the Tien-shan and Pamir ranges, but today's maps show two means of entering West Turkistan, one leading into the Farghana basin of Uzbekistan and the other into the Chu basin of Kirghizia. Main trunks of the Silk Road, the two ways have played an all-important role in cultural interchange between East and West—and they also (insofar as Chang Ch'ien is concerned) led to the Farghana basin, in which lay Ta Wan. Before the time of Chang Ch'ien, men must have traveled from China to East Turkistan and then further on to West Turkistan, rather like water seeking its own level. These men pursued their goals, ignoring the great natural obstacles posed by the Takla-makan Desert and the high Tien-shan and Pamir peaks, snowcapped the year round. Merchandise must have gone from West to East Turkistan and from there to China, like a stick being handed on from runner to runner in a relay race, and in similar fashion merchandise must have passed from China to the West. As though to give proof of human determination, East-West communication crosses Tien-shan and the Pamirs like a number of thin threads, clearly visible at some points, almost disappearing at others.

As one looks down upon Tien-shan and the Pamirs from the height of an airplane, one senses that here, perhaps more than anywhere else in the world, some divine will has forbidden entrance to man. Yet man has entered: in the unknown past he cut a way for himself across the deep, seemingly fathomless creases in the mountains. Following just such a path, Chang Ch'ien crossed Tien-shan and descended—the first man known to history to do so—onto the burning bright expanse of earth on the other side. Now there were no more world roofs to cross,

only a wide desert that seemed to extend itself boundlessly in the direction of the Aral and the Black seas. I felt a sense of guilt toward Chang Ch'ien when I crossed the Andijan country, in the southern part of the Farghana basin, traveling by car over an excellent paved road.

The Farghana basin may sound like rather a small area, but actually it is as large as several of Europe's small principalities put together, extending some two hundred miles east and west and over a hundred north and south. Mountains surround it, on east, north, and south, and its sole entrance on the west is the Khodzhent region. Time and again the basin has been invaded, and all of the invaders, including the Greeks under Alexander, the Arabs, and the Mongols, have entered through this western gateway.

Across the northern part of the basin meanders the Sir Darya, which has its source in the Chatkal range in the north and Tien-shan in the east. Using the waters of the Sir Darya, canals have been—and are being—built: there is one in the north, there are two in the south, and a fourth is being constructed through the central region. One in the south is called simply the Farghana Canal; it is over eighty-five feet wide and runs for a distance of more than twenty miles. Thanks to these canals, areas of the basin that were formerly desert are gradually being cultivated. The Farghana Valley, as I have noted, lies in Uzbekistan, and its population accordingly is composed mainly of Uzbeks, although it includes fifty other ethnic groups as well. Four of its present-day cities—Farghana, Andijan, Namangan, and Kokand—are found near the rim of the basin, within a distance of fifty miles of each other; and of them the two ancient cities of Andijan and Kokand are said (along with Khodzhent, Khiva, and Uzgen) to have been in existence before the Christian era.

How the basin looked at the time Chang Ch'ien visited it is, of course, unknown to us, but of one thing we may be fairly certain, and that is how he entered it. After crossing Tien-shan, he must have descended into present-day Andijan country, in the eastern part of the basin, and then perhaps moved west following the line that connects today's Andijan, Uzgen, and Kokand, all in the southern part of the basin. Then, not leaving the basin in the neighborhood of Khodzhent, he

passed once more over the northern ranges and appears to have entered Kirghizia, where the foothills of Tien-shan loomed directly ahead. As I noted earlier, he might have entered Kirghizia by crossing Tien-shan, but he did not. Leaving Kirghizia, he headed across the desert, boundless as the sea, toward Ta Yüeh-chih, which is thought to have been east of present-day Bukhara. If we draw a line across the map, tracing Chang Ch'ien's route, and if we try to follow him as he makes his way beside the deep folds of the mountains and along the banks of the Sir Darya and across the desert, boundless as the sea, we almost lose sight of him, he looks so very small.

It had been Wu Ti's desire to procure the blood-sweating steeds of Ta Wan and with them put an end to the power of the Hsiung-nu, but the increasing tempo of Hsiung-nu incursions made immediate action mandatory, so without waiting for the horses, Wu Ti commanded one of his chief generals to lead an attack against the Hsiung-nu. The year was 123 B.C. Chang Ch'ien, who for ten years had been a prisoner of the Hsiung-nu and so had become familiar with their ways, served as an officer during the operation. It was a wise choice, for Chang Ch'ien knew thoroughly the geography of the marshy land where the Hsiung-nu made their camps and led their nomadic life. This knowledge was extremely useful to the military command, and for his services during the campaign Chang Ch'ien was elevated to the rank of Lord of the Wide Vision.

The following year—i.e., 122 B.C.—he was assigned to assist in a mopping-up operation against the Hsiung-nu, during which (for reasons unknown) he arrived on the field too late for the battle. Because of this, Wu Ti's main forces were surrounded by the enemy and escaped only with the greatest of difficulty. Clearly, Chang Ch'ien had to be punished. Although he was not a professional soldier, his offense was so grave that he would ordinarily have suffered decapitation. In view, however, of his services during the Central Asian exploration, Wu Ti commuted his punishment to loss of honor and title: he became merely an ordinary citizen.

The three or four years that followed were a period of brilliant military activity under General Huo Ch'ü-ping, commander of a light

cavalry division. So successful was he, after reaching Mount Chi Lien, that his army is said to have slain tens of thousands of Hsiung-nu soldiers, driving the rest out of the region so that there was not a single Hsiung-nu soldier to be seen west of the Yangtze River.

Seeing that his military operations against the Hsiung-nu had developed so favorably, Wu Ti turned his mind once again to the fascinating lands of the distant Western Territories. Here, of course, he had no choice but to consult Chang Ch'ien, for although the latter had committed a serious blunder in a military operation, he was still the authority on Central Asia. When he spoke about his journey there, he became a different person; every word took on life and immediacy.

"One thing," he said, "that I neglected to mention to Your Majesty is the heroic deeds of a man called K'un Mu. The Hsiung-nu killed his father and brought the boy up in one of their military camps, but after he was grown he managed to escape. Later he was able to found a nation called Wu Sung. It is my belief that, properly approached, he might be of great help to Your Majesty. So capable is K'un Mu that not even the Hsiung-nu dare attack Wu Sung. If Your Majesty offered him and his people treasure and succeeded in forming an alliance with them, that would be a hard blow for the Hsiung-nu. Further, it seems likely that other nations of Central Asia would follow Wu Sung's lead in making obeisance to Han power."

These words sounded very beguiling to Wu Ti. "Let it be done at once," he said to Chang Ch'ien. "You shall be appointed to a high position, and you will have three hundred men under your command and six hundred horses." Thus spoke Wu Ti; and now Chang Ch'ien, who had been reduced to the rank of private citizen, was about to reappear in history as the official emissary of the Han dynasty to the Western Territories.

After loading many of the horses with rich gifts, Chang Ch'ien set out once again for the West. His destination this time was Wu Sung, which was not so far from China as Ta Yüeh-chih, although to reach Wu Sung, as to reach Ta Yüeh-chih, he had to cross the great desert, boundless as the sea, where no beasts lived and where no birds flew. The land toward which he was headed might be thought of as the

border area between the Singkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region of China and the Soviet Union.

Alas, although he reached Wu Sung after the long journey, his hopes were not to be fulfilled: K'un Mu refused to chance a breach in his relations with the Hsiung-nu by forming an alliance with Han. However, Chang Ch'ien did not return quite empty-handed, for he brought back with him a dozen emissaries from Wu Sung as well as scores of excellent horses. Nor, before leaving Wu Sung, did he neglect to send men to distant Ta Wan, K'ang Chü, and Ta Yüeh-chih, as well as to Ta Hsia on the northern border of Afghanistan, to An Hsi on the Persian border, to Shen Tu on the Indian border, and to Kan T'ien and Kan Mi on the southern Tien-shan route.

Pleased at the arrival of a dozen ambassadors from Wu Sung, vainglorious Wu Ti forthwith appointed Chang Ch'ien to the rank of Master of Guests and listed him among the Nine Ministers (with access to the emperor)—positions of great importance. The following year, full of honor and praise, Chang Ch'ien died. Only after his death did the men whom he had sent to the various peoples of Central Asia return, bringing emissaries with them—a circumstance that added even further luster to his name; but before he died, nevertheless, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had not altogether failed in answering the call of his sovereign.

II

Now whenever Wu Ti encountered the ambassadors of these alien peoples, with their strange customs, he found himself remembering Chang Ch'ien's words—and at the remembrance, an overpowering excitement gripped him. "Blood-sweating horses!" How avidly he desired those steeds of the West that had the reputation of being the best in the world. The very thought of them left him weak. But Chang Ch'ien was dead, and Wu Ti had no one to advise him as to what further steps he might take to procure those famous animals.

At last he determined to take measures into his own hands; he dispatched an ambassador to Ta Wan with authority to negotiate the acquisition of the horses on the emperor's behalf. Unfortunately, not only did the negotiations come to nothing, but the ambassador and all his retinue were set upon, on the way home, and cruelly murdered. When he heard this, Wu Ti's mind was suddenly made up: he had no choice but to conquer Ta Wan. He had just cause—the death of his ambassador—and at the same time he might procure for himself the blood-sweating horses. He publicly proclaimed his decision.

As commander in chief of this expedition, he chose a man named Li Kuang-li, the older brother of his best-beloved wife, now dead. Like his sister, Li Kuang-li was extremely handsome, and he was fond of music—but he knew nothing about war, nor had he ever engaged in military adventure. He believed himself equal to the task of negotiating for the horses, but when it came to acquiring them through military conquest, he was less sanguine about his capabilities. However, Wu Ti had spoken, Wu Ti had conferred upon him the title of General Ehr Shih (after a Ta Wan citadel called the Ehr Shih Castle), Wu Ti had made his meaning plain: Li Kuang-li was not only to conquer Ta Wan but also to bring back its blood-sweating horses. Nothing less would suffice, and so, whether he liked it or not, Li Kuang-li had no choice but to depart on a strange journey, at the end of which he was to give battle to an alien people.

In the year 104 B.C. he left the capital at the head of a large force, composed of tens of thousands of ruffians (all of whom had volunteered) as well as several thousand prisoners of war of varied background. Li Kuang-li of course rode at the head of his army, swaying back and forth on his camel: in his heart, as he thought of the battles that lay ahead, he had little hope of success. His soldiers were numerous, to be sure, a fact that offered his only hope of success, but it was a slim one, for the men were little more than ill-trained and undisciplined thugs.

Many days after leaving the capital, the forces approached the Jade Gate, and there, before entering the Takla-makan Desert, known as "the place of flowing sand," the men were grouped into several di-

visions. Their troubles began the day they left the Gate behind. Once they were west of the Yangtze River, they had had, to be sure, difficulty in obtaining food and shelter, for west of the Yangtze dwelt alien peoples; after they left the Jade Gate they found themselves in a land quite untouched by Han influence. Here no village felt any obligation to feed the passing army. Their progress, accordingly, was slowed, for often they had to spend several days at a place, trying to negotiate for food, sometimes begging the villagers for it and sometimes finally being obliged to take it by force of arms. Often the initial goodwill of a village was turned to enmity by the looting of the soldiers.

We do not know whether this Han expeditionary force passed into Central Asia by way of the northern or southern desert route, for the chronicle does not tell us, but we do know that after the first year, the number of deserters increased conspicuously. Sometimes dozens disappeared at a time, and every day Li Kuang-li would ask himself whether this was not the day to turn back. It seemed to him that, under prevailing conditions, it would take years to reach Ta Wan—and his objective, after all, was not merely to reach it but to take it by force. For months he continued undecided, and meanwhile he and his army had entered the Tien-shan region, where, after extreme hardship, they finally arrived at a citadel called Yü Ch'eng. It lay within Ta Wan hegemony and was defended by Ta Wan soldiers.

Li Kuang-li invested the castle, but its defenders, shooting from within, easily routed the besiegers every time they attacked. Fortunately for the Han forces, the Ta Wan defenders were too few in number to annihilate the attacking army, but the fact was soon evident that there was no hope of taking it. How then could Li's forces ever hope to conquer the far more imposing royal castle? Whatever chance there might have been was rendered daily more unlikely of fulfillment by the ever-increasing tempo of desertion and by the ever-deteriorating food supply. Starvation, in fact, faced the men if they remained there where they were, before the castle of Yü Ch'eng.

"How many deserters have we had?" Li Kuang-li asked his officers.

"Eight out of every ten men have escaped."

"And food?"

"Worse and worse. And once the men start looting, that will be the end."

"The end of what?"

"I meant that your very life will be in danger."

At this the general paled, and after a moment reached his decision: he had no choice but to go home. Returning now, he would still bring back a few of his men; if he waited, the entire force would certainly perish. So the Han army raised its siege of Yü Ch'eng Castle and in the darkness of the night crept silently away.

This citadel that the Han army once unsuccessfully laid siege to is thought by Soviet historians to have stood at present-day Uzgen in the Osh country of Kirghizia, Uzgen being a mountain village of Tien-shan through which one passes on one's way to the Farghana basin from East Turkistan. (Chang Ch'ien, too, is thought to have gone through Uzgen on his journey to Ta Yüeh-chih.) The whole area was then called Yü, to which Chinese historians may have assigned the characters Yü Ch'eng, and today part of the castle and the castle wall are still standing. The ruins are said to be not unlike those of Samarkand—but I have never seen them, nor do I know of any traveler from abroad who has.

Six months after lifting his siege of the castle, General Li Kuang-li reached the Jade Gate. The expedition had taken, in all, two years, and the vast army that set out had dwindled to only a few thousand men. The general at once sent a messenger to the capital to report to the emperor what had happened. According to the *Shih-chi*, the message went as follows:

> Often the army went hungry because of the vast distance of the place; the soldiers, in fact, complained more bitterly about the shortage of food than about the fighting itself. Further, the men were too few in number to make it possible to conquer Ta Wan. I pray that the expedition be delayed for a time, and I await another chance to accomplish the mission.

To this, after many days of waiting, came an answer from the capital. It came in the form of a message ordering all soldiers who had been on

the ill-fated expedition and who were now within the Jade Gate to go outside at once upon pain of death. Further, the message commanded that the gate be guarded by soldiers of the garrison. The general had no choice but to obey orders; he and his men encamped outside the gate, wondering when permission would be given for them to enter once again.

Not until a year had passed did the new army for which Li Kuang-li had petitioned arrive at the campsite. This time the soldiers, unlike those of the previous expedition, were trained men and men of valor; only prisoners who could draw a strong bow were allowed to enlist; conscripted also were the cavalry that guarded the border. In all, the total number of enlisted men under Li's command was estimated at some sixty thousand, but the real number of those who were part of the army was much greater, for in addition to the enlisted soldiers it included also soldiers who supplied their own food, private servants, and camp followers of various kinds. To feed and carry all these men and their equipment there were a hundred thousand oxen, thirty thousand horses, and uncounted thousands of donkeys and camels. This time both food and matériel were adequate; in every way, in fact, the new army was very different from that that had preceded it.

Furthermore, one hundred eighty thousand soldiers were stationed at the border areas of Chiu Ch'üan and Chang I in case of emergency, while soldiers stationed in the garrisons were commanded to ensure the food supply of the expeditionary force. Men who were familiar with horses were attached to the army to look after the war-horses and were also, it goes without saying, charged with seeing that the famous steeds of Ta Wan were brought safely back.

In amassing an army of such size, in equipping it so thoroughly, and in placing it all under the command of Li Kuang-li, Wu Ti was giving the brother of his beloved wife a chance to recapture his lost honor; and the general, once preparations were complete, headed with all dispatch for Ta Wan—this second time with a great army, handsomely equipped. "The whole world was excited," says the *Shih-chi*, "and everywhere people volunteered to join the expedition to conquer Ta Wan." Thus it may be seen, from even so short a description, how the entire

power of the Han state was massed to make the expedition a success.

The force was divided into several battalions, which proceded along both the north and the south routes. The peoples among whom the armies moved reacted quite differently on this occasion from the way they had earlier: this time, impressed by the magnificence of the invading force, they offered food and whatever else they had.

The first battle, which was fought at Lun T'ou, lasted only a few days and ended with the total defeat of the enemy. Putting aside for the moment the conquest of Hsi Hsing and Yü Ch'eng, the expeditionary force now headed directly for the fortified capital city. The army that besieged it numbered only some thirty thousand men, having dwindled to that figure in the course of the march.

The defenders of the citadel chose to meet the invaders on the ground outside, but were soon driven back by the main force of the invading army, which consisted of bowmen. The latter fought so well that they soon had the citadel wholly surrounded. Although one of the first things the besieging forces did was to cut the water supply of the capital, it did not fall easily. There were almost daily battles, and only on about the fortieth day did the besiegers gain control of the outer fortifications. During this battle, they captured General Chien Mi, a member of the royal family and a soldier famous for his bravery.

Meanwhile, within the besieged castle, as a result of consultations between the monarch and other members of his family, his widowed mother was executed and her head was brought out to the Han army with the following peace proposal: if the invaders lifted the siege immediately and refrained from further attacks, the Ta Wan king would permit them to choose all the horses they wanted; but if the invaders refused to accept these conditions, the men of Ta Wan would kill all the horses that the Han emperor wanted and would fight on, making use of reinforcements from K'ang Chü that had already begun arriving.

At this, Li Kuang-li consulted with his chief officers, all of whom agreed that the peace proposals had better be accepted, if only because the strength of the newly arrived supporting army was considerable. That it had not yet entered the fray was due to the overwhelming force of the Han army. The general, accordingly, having sent word of his

acceptance of the Ta Wan conditions, entered the outer court of the citadel to receive the famous blood-sweating horses—the main goal, after all, of the expedition. For the first time in over forty days no battle was fought as General Li chose several dozen blood-sweating horses and some three thousand ordinary mounts. At the same time he elevated to the Ta Wan throne a man named Mei Ts'ai, one who had treated the previous Han emissaries well. In accordance with the peace terms, Li Kuang-li departed without allowing his soldiers to enter the middle castle.

A temporary setback occured when a unit of a thousand men attempted to seize Yü Ch'eng Castle. They were driven back, and most of them were slain, including the commanding officer, Wang Shen-sheng. When General Li received word of this disaster, he sent a whole division to Yü Ch'eng. The castle fell, and the king fled to K'ang Chü, but its citizens, refusing him sanctuary, handed him over to the Han forces, who executed him and brought his head to Li Kuang-li. These Han victories struck fear into all the nations of Central Asia, and as the conquering army marched home, the peoples along the way offered their sons to be soldiers. The Han officers accepted them and kept them as hostages.

Now Li Kuang-li, General Ehr Shih, having accomplished his mission satisfactorily, entered the Jade Gate in triumph. Although his force of sixty thousand men had dwindled to a mere ten thousand and although only a thousand horses returned of those that had set out, Wu Ti was content—for he now possessed a number of the finest horses in the world, the envy of everyone. He rewarded Li Kuang-li by elevating him to the lordship of the land west of the Yangtze, and he rewarded also all the officers and men of the victorious army. Three he appointed ministers, a hundred or so were made viceroys or governors of prefectures; some were granted ten thousand bushels of rice, others five thousand or less.

It seems clear, from the description given in the *Shih-chi*, that the fortified city that Li Kuang-li besieged and from which he obtained the blood-sweating horses was indeed Ehr Shih Castle. Further, considering that this castle is frequently referred to in the chronicles as the capital

of Ta Wan, it should be a safe assumption that the castle besieged by Li Kuang-li was indeed the capital of the nation. However, a difficulty arises when one consults the *Han-shu*, the *Han Chronicles*, as authoritative as the *Shih-chi*, for the *Han-shu* tells us that the capital of Ta Wan was Kuei Shan Castle. Were the two castles really one bearing one name at one time and another at another? Or were they altogether different places? Scholars of Central Asia give varying answers, and the question has been a frequent subject of debate, but let us assume here—at any rate for the moment—that the two castles were actually one and that this was indeed the Ta Wan capital. This is the theory that I personally incline to, and it has the sanction of many distinguished scholars.

However, even after making this assumption, there still remains the major problem: where actually *was* this capital city? If we knew the answer, we would know where the world-famous horses of Ta Wan came from; we would know what their superb pasturage has now become. The problem is of interest, then, not only to scholars but to anyone who considers the history and geography of this part of the world, although for scholars of the region, naturally, the subject is one of extreme importance. In fact, so much has been written in an attempt to resolve the puzzle that one begins to wonder how the site of the Ta Wan capital could produce so many words. In Japan alone the list of articles published on the subject is forbiddingly long.*

In general, the discussions begin with the problem of what sounds were given the Chinese characters that stand for the names of the capital. The scholars then go on to attempt to fix its site on the basis of descriptions in the two histories—the topography of the region, the size and position of the rivers, and the distance from other places. Solving

*Among works of Japanese scholarship in the field are articles by J. Kuwahara, K. Shiratori, and T. Fujita (most of them published between 1915 and 1918), as well as those by M. Naka, and Y. Miyake. Non-Japanese scholars who have discussed the problem include von Lichthofen, Goodschmit, de Lacoupériè, Herman, and Bernshtam.

the problem is not unlike solving a mystery story. Among the solutions that have been offered, and defended, as the site of this ancient capital may be mentioned Kokand, Ura-Tyube, Khodzhent, Kasan, and Margilan; and if we mark on a map of the region these various candidates for the honor of producing the finest horses in the world, we see that they are scattered over the entire Farghana basin. General Li Kuang-li has left us with a very knotty problem indeed.

Of Soviet scholars who have considered the question, one of the most provocative is A. N. Bernshtam, a well-known archaeologist whose death occurred only recently. It was in 1946 that Bernshtam discovered some incised pictures on a rock wall on the right bank of the Arawan River, near the town of Arawan, which lies some fifteen miles northwest of Oshu in the southern half of the Farghana basin. Located at a height of almost fifty feet above ground, the pictures depict several wild goats and two horses, a stallion and a mare. The artist seems to have used a hard metallic implement to cut into the rock surface.

In his *Introduction to the History and Archaeology of the Central Tien-shan and Pamir-Arai*, published in 1952 by the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Bernshtam points out that the two horses differ in appearance from those of Mongolia and West Asia and suggests that they might be what the Chinese called "blood-sweating horses." He wonders, then, if the pictures might not have been the goal of a pilgrimage for horse-breeders coming to pray for the well-being of their animals. Further, following the view of Thomaschek and Bartold, Bernshtam holds that Erh Shih Castle stood on the bank of the Oshu River between Khiva and Oshu; he identifies the Marhamat remains as those of the castle.

Bernshtam's report on the Marhamat remains tells us that it was a castle surrounded by a stout wall, with eighteen studded protective towers on the west side, sixteen on the east, twelve on the north, and six on the south, and with sixteen mounds within the walls. Bernshtam believes that the artifacts excavated at the site date from the third or second century B.C., and he confirms the existence at the site of both a middle and an outer citadel. It was his opinion that the Ehr Shih Castle of the royal capital of ancient Farghana was not only a political center but also a center of skilled horse breeding, repeating his belief that the

pictures had some connection with a regional fertility cult. On the one-capital/two-capital question, his view is that at the time of the *Shih-chi* the Ta Wan capital was Ehr Shih Castle (Marhamat) and then later, at the time of the *Han-shu*, it was Kuei Shan Castle (Kasan).

I myself am of course quite unable to judge whether Bernshtam's theory is so persuasive that it must put an end to the sometimes heated debates on the question of the identity of this ancient capital, but one thing is certain: the debates gave rise to much valuable on-the-ground investigation, which in turn has brought to light a great deal of valuable information. It was at the end of May (when the weather was still a bit cold) that I made my first visit to the Farghana basin, visiting Kuwa, Kokand, and Margilan, all of them contenders for the honor of having been the Ta Wan capital.

Kuwa, a small, quiet village with whitewashed mud houses, was famous in the region for its pomegranates, and I was told that it even exported them, but I failed to see enough trees to account for this story. The center of the village was animated, with a number of old men drinking tea at outdoor tea stands. Just outside the village stood the remains of a signal tower, a crumbling earthen mound so ruined that probably only a professional archaeologist could have identified it. At the foot of the tower was a mud hut around which children were playing. When I questioned them, they seemed never to have heard of Uzbek, Kirghiz, or Tajik. Around the village stretched a wide plateau, on which I could see rows of mulberry trees and poplars.

Both Margilan and Kokand are larger towns than Kuwa. On Margilan's main street, shaded by rows of splendid trees, stand several modern buildings; then, once one is outside the central section, Margilan, like Kuwa, becomes a quiet little village with low mud houses. I have already spoken of Margilan's bazaar, where, like a cross section of the heart of Central Asia, every tribe in the land seemed to be represented. Gesticulating wildly, moving energetically about, everyone was creating more confusion and making more noise than I would have thought possible. Kokand is famous for its royal castle, built during the days of its prosperity and power, and for its museum, which stands imposingly in the center of town.

Kwua, Margilan, and Kokand are all towns of ancient foundation, dating from before the Christian era, but no remains of this early period are now to be seen. The Arab invasion of the eighth century affected not only the people of the basin but also the physical appearance of the towns, and so did the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century. Peoples have come and gone, have lived and died, and what they have left behind lies buried deep underground, so it is hardly to be wondered at that the blood-sweating horses of Ta Wan remain only as images fixed on a rock wall.

What touched me most, as I stood in the Vale of Farghana, with the snowcapped mountains in the distance, was the thought of a man's life. The man was General Li Kuang-li, who once fought valiantly on this prairie and brought back many of its famous horses—General Li, brother of the beloved queen, who conquered Ta Wan for Wu Ti and who later fought the Hsiung-nu. He should have left his name in the history books as a famous general, as famous as Wei Ch'ing and Huo Ch'ü-ping, but here fate was not kind to him. A commanding officer during the war with the Hsiung-nu in 91 B.C., he heard a rumor from the capital that his name was linked with a major scandal, and so, with the thought that he might yet brighten his tarnished honor, he plunged deep into enemy lines. He was captured by the Hsiung-nu and beheaded. This occurred some seven years after the glorious expedition to Ta Wan.

The Lake of Tien-shan

Chang Ch'ien, appointed by Wu Ti to be the first Chinese emissary to Central Asia, fulfilled the monarch's expectations so well that as a reward he was elevated to the rank of Lord of the Wide Vision, appointed to be Master of Guests, and was listed among the Nine Ministers. Although Chang Ch'ien, when he died, was more than content with all the honors that had been bestowed upon him, the extravagant emperor began to feel, as time went by, that he had rewarded his servant insufficiently well.

After all, he reasoned, he would not now possess the blood-sweating horses of Ta Wan were it not for Chang Ch'ien's initial report on the Western Territories; further, the establishment of good relations with Wu Sung (a major event of the reign) was also in large part owed to Chang Ch'ien, who advised the alliance and who served with great distinction as the first Han emissary to Wu Sung. Most important of all, perhaps, the alliance had a profound effect on other Central Asian nations, all of which now desired friendlier relations with the Han kingdom. To this effect Western rulers began sending rare and unknown treasures to the Han capital, and also ostrich eggs and magicians and sorcerers. Caravans of these strangers from the north and from far-distant West Turkistan, having crossed the passes of Tien-shan and the Pamirs and navigated the sea of "flowing sand," entered China through the Jade Gate, and so this famous caravan route first came into being —a route that was later to be known as the Silk Road. It owed its existence to none other than Chang Ch'ien.

"If he were still alive," Wu Ti frequently remarked to his close per-

sonal attendants, "I would reward him more generously. I tell you now to take him as a model for everything that you do." Nonetheless, it is difficult to imagine how the emperor could have rewarded him more generously than he had already. Perhaps, inasmuch as Wu Ti was very fond of issuing Imperial Rescripts, he might have issued one in honor of Chang Ch'ien, praising him in the most extravagant words imaginable.

At the same time one must not forget that because of this very same Chang Ch'ien certain people were doomed to spend their lives in misery. Such a one was Hsi Chün, daughter of Chien, King of Chiang Tu. It all began when King K'un Mu of Wu Sung expressed a desire to wed a royal princess, offering in return a gift of a thousand horses. The proposal was opportune, for Wu Ti had long considered the idea of wedding a daughter of the royal house to the king of Wu Sung, since it would mean a further cementing of the bonds between the two nations. The emperor was also enchanted at the prospect of having in his possession a thousand Wu Sung horses, for the proposal came before he had procured the blood-sweating horses of Ta Wan. Feeling that a royal princess or two was a small price to pay, he accordingly offered the aforementioned Hsi Chün. It may be noted here, parenthetically, that the steeds of Wu Sung were later known as "Western horses," thus distinguishing them from those of Ta Wan, which were called "The Horses of Heaven."

That the bridal procession was a beautiful one need hardly be remarked upon. After leaving the capital, it passed through the region west of the Yangtze River and then left by way of the Jade Gate; once it was on alien soil, it seemed to be little more than an ordinary caravan, with only a slightly larger number of armed men riding camels, to protect the procession, than is usual with a caravan. Wherever she went, the royal princess, with her suite, received a royal welcome, and since the peoples who lived in the desert area around Wu Sung (numbering some thirty nations) were all subject to Han dominion, there was no danger of attack from them. Even the enemy Hsiung-nu offered no immediate threat, for they had now moved back into the far north. Nevertheless, the fact remained that the royal princess was being mar-

ried off to a monarch in the far western frontier of the lands that acknowledged Han sovereignty. If there was no threat of danger to the princess before her marriage, neither was there any guarantee of safety after it—for who could say when Wu Sung might go to war with a neighboring power? In such an event, a royal Han princess could be extremely useful.

The Wu Sung were nomads who, with their beasts, roamed the land around the Ili River, Lake Issik Kol, and the Talas River, north of the Tien-shan range. It is an area that extends from the northeast corner of present-day Kirghizia to the northwest frontier of the former Sinkiang Province of China. "The Wu Sung territory lies some two thousand *li* northeast of Ta Wan. They do not remain in one place but move about the territory with their animals, looking for pasturage. In this they resemble the Hsiung-nu. They have a large army—some tens of thousands—of archers. Once they were subject to the Hsiung-nu, but now they are powerful enough to have shaken off this yoke and they no longer pay tribute to the Hsiung-nu." This, according to the *Shih-chi*, is how Chang Ch'ien described the Wu Sung to the emperor. Now Chang Ch'ien was no more, and within a short while of his death the royal princess was being given to the Wu Sung ruler in marriage, and the land of Wu Sung remained much as it had been when Chang Ch'ien described it to his master.

After she had traveled with her suite for some time, the young Han princess reached the oasis where the royal tent of Wu Sung was pitched. It lay in a plateau in the heart of Tien-shan. When, on her arrival, K'un Mu came to welcome her, she was terribly shocked at first sight of this Wu Sung chieftain. He seemed so incredibly old! And nothing like the glowing warrior she had imagined him to be.

For the princess had, of course, heard all the strange tales that were told about him: how, when still an infant, he had been abandoned in the wilds after his father was killed by the Hsiung-nu; how the birds brought him food and the wolves suckled him and he grew strong and healthy; how a powerful Hsiung-nu chieftain, hearing of this, had the boy brought to his tent and how the chief reared the boy, believing him to be no ordinary mortal but the son of a god. Then, after the boy had

grown to sturdy young manhood, he was given an army to lead and was able to demonstrate his remarkable talent as a military leader. Then the Hsiung-nu chief gave the boy the people and the land that the boy's father had once possessed and gave him also the western frontier of Hsiung-nu territory to guard. Not long after, the Hsiung-nu chieftain died, and K'un Mu moved with his people and his animals to another land, breaking his ties with the Hsiung-nu and setting himself up as an independent ruler. Although affronted, the Hsiung-nu nevertheless refrained from going to war against K'un Mu, for they shared the belief that he was no ordinary mortal. And there seemed good reason for this belief, because whenever he took up arms K'un Mu emerged victorious: surely then he came of divine parentage and enjoyed divine protection.

Such were the stories that Hsi Chün, the young Han princess, had heard about her future bridegroom. How different he seemed when she saw him in front of his tent in the heart of Tien-shan! He was an old man: his red hair was sprinkled with white, his blue eyes were dulled, his actions were those of old age. Aside from that, moreover, Hsi Chün could see in this man nothing to suggest that he was the son of a god or even a great warrior.

"Beautiful young princess," he said to her, "today you become my wife of the right hand. Though you are terribly far from the land of your birth, you need not fear, for I know that I am old but when the right time comes I shall marry you to my grandson." Having lost his older son, K'un Mu intended to be succeeded as ruler of Wu Sung by that son's son, a youth named Ch'en Ch'ü, who was of a far more suitable age to be the bridegroom of the young Han princess than old K'un Mu. And the young daughter of the royal house of Han was disappointed not only in the age of her husband but also in the fact that she could not speak the language of his people; she suffered terribly from homesickness.

Han messengers came frequently to Wu Sung, and to one of them she showed a poem she had written: "My home is somewhere in the heavens that forced me to marry. I serve the king of the alien Wu Sung. I live in a round house, with walls of animal hide. I eat raw meat and drink yogurt. My heart is sick from morning to night, and I think only of my

motherland. Oh, that I were a phoenix, a yellow phoenix, and could fly through the heavens to my own land, which I have never forgotten, not even in dreams!"

When the Hsiung-nu learned that a royal daughter of Han had become K'un Mu's wife, they for their part sent him a daughter of their own royal house, also to be his wife. This girl K'un Mu took as his wife of the left hand, at the same time announcing his intention to give Hsi Chün to his grandson, Ch'en Ch'ü. But the Han princess was by now indifferent as to whether her husband was young or old, while the mere thought of exchanging one husband for another was repugnant to her. She wrote a letter of entreaty to her own land, but Wu Ti replied coldly: "You must follow the custom of the country where you are." So she had no choice but to marry Ch'en Ch'ü, to whom she bore a daughter, and shortly thereafter she languished and died, having lived but five or six years in Wu Sung. Soon she was replaced by another Han princess, Chiai Yu, the granddaughter of Liu Wa, King of Ch'u, who was sent to Wu Sung to be the bride of young Ch'en Ch'ü.

Now the question arises as to the location of the Wu Sung capital. Where was this corner of heaven where the Han princess spent the last years of her short life? The *Han-shu*, speaking of a period a little later than that of Hsi Chün, tells about a place called "Red Valley Castle." The term appears in such phrases as: "following hard upon the Wu Sung, they reached Red Valley Castle," or "they pursued them beyond Red Valley Castle, into the east," or "they followed the north road into Red Valley and passed the Wu Sung." Now it is obviously impossible, on the basis of such short sentences, to come to any hard and fast conclusion about the exact site of Red Valley, but scholars, making educated guesses, have identified it with the valley on either the east or the south bank of Lake Issik Kol or that of the Narin River. In any case, in the words of the Han princess, it lay in a corner of heaven on a slope of Tien-shan. Thus the Silk Road to the West, moving through the valley of the Ili River toward Issik Kol, passed beside Red Valley Castle.

In Kirghizia I visited Frunze and Tokmak, both of which lie in the basin of the Chu River, with its source in Tien-shan, and both of which once stood on the Silk Road. Frunze affords a view of the towering, snow-

capped faces of the Alai mountains, but at Tokmak the Chu basin is a level plain. However, only twenty miles away, that plain is cut by the snow-covered Alai range, through which the Silk Road wound its tortuous way, and on the other side of the mountains lay Issik Kol—which, more than any other place, I wanted very much to visit. Alas, like Uzgen to the south, it was not open to tourists, and since I could claim no archaeological credentials, I had to be content with having got as close to it as I did.

No other ancient caravan route has seen so much of the prosperity and the consequent adversity of the various peoples of Central Asia as the road that leads from Issik Kol to Tokmak. There Wu Sung was invaded by the Hsiung-nu, then by the Hs'iens, and still later by the Juan-juans. As a result of these successive incursions, the people of Wu Sung were forced to move further to the west, into the Pamirs, and shortly thereafter—in the fifth century—they disappear completely from history. Just as the people of Wu Sung have kept secret from us the precise location of the land where they dwelt, so also have the various peoples who took their place in the region, peoples who entered history and, when the time came, departed from it without letting us know where they lived—as though God himself had required this of them.

Interestingly enough, a city is said to lie buried at the bottom of Issik Kol, but no one seems to know how old the city is, nor even whether there might not be cities, towns, and villages of different periods lying buried there in the bed of the lake. I shall speak of this again a little later, but meanwhile there rises another question to be answered (which cannot be answered): who were the Wu Sung? Some Russian scholars are of the opinion that they were "Asians" of Scythia, the people who conquered the Bactrian kingdom of the Greeks. This would make them members of an Iranian group. Other scholars, however, consider them to be a minor branch of the Hsiung-nu peoples, which would make them Turkish. This, I am told, is the opinion held by the majority of Central Asian scholars today.

It was in the year 100 B.C. that the short and unhappy life of the Han princess ended at the royal capital beside Lake Issik Kol, but after that, for the next six or seven hundred years, no details have come down to

us about the history of the area. We know that at one time the power of China extended beyond the Tien-shan range, at another China gave up her idea of dominating Central Asia and closed the Jade Gate. We know that for a time the road to Turkistan that was cleared at Wu Ti's command played a vital role in furthering intercourse between East and West; at other times the area through which the road passed remained unvisited by outsiders, and no one even knew the road was there except local people.

During all those years Central Asia saw the rise and fall of peoples and nations. In East Turkistan small countries that lay on the edges of the Takla-makan Desert, along both the northern and the southern routes, fought one another; made alliances, then broke them; united, then separated; disappeared, then rose again. And the same was true of West Turkistan, on the other side of Tien-shan. There the country called Wu Sung disappeared without a trace; then, in the sixth century, rose a powerful nomadic people known as the T'u-ch'üeh, the period of whose hegemony lasted until the middle of the seventh century. It was during this time that the Buddhist monk, Hsüan-ts'ang, visited Issik Kol and left us the first Chinese account of this lake that lies in the heart of Tien-shan.

Hsüan-ts'ang San-tsang, the monk whom the Chinese call I Ch'en (and the Japanese Genjō Sanzō), was born the fourth child of the family, in a village east of Lo-yang in Honan Province. The exact year of his birth is uncertain, although such dates as 596, 600, and 602 have been suggested by scholars. The biography of the monk gives us many of the facts of his life, but it fails to tell us the year of his birth.

Whatever that year may have been, he is said to have left home at the age of thirteen, when he entered the service of a temple in Lo-yang belonging to the Pure Land sect. Four years later, at the age of seventeen, he moved to Ch'ang-an and the following year moved again, this time to Ch'eng-tu, in the province of Szechwan, one of the country's chief provincial towns and one famous for its learning. The reason for these many changes of dwelling on the part of the young scholar must have been the disturbances that shook the country at the collapse of the Sui dynasty and the establishment of the T'ang.

Leaving Ch'eng-tu at the age of twenty-one, the young man wandered from temple to temple, seeking learned and saintly monks. When, finally, he returned to Ch'ang-an he was widely known among the people as a youth of great piety. He was not, from any point of view, an ordinary young man. When he was twenty-six, this talented youth asked permission of the government to make a trip to the West, but permission was not granted. However, not long after it was refused, he determined to make the trip nonetheless, even without permission; for more than anything else he wanted to see India, which had given Buddhism to the world, he wanted to visit the birthplace of the Buddha, and he wanted to read Buddhist scriptures that were not available in China. There had been a fairly constant, though by no means abundant, interchange of Buddhist monks between India and China ever since Fa Hsien went to India at the end of the fourth century and, upon his return after a stay of fifteen years, wrote his *Record of a Journey to the Country of Buddha*. From India to China, in the years that followed, came Lo Shih and later, in the sixth century, Bodhidharma. The spirit of these monks, and their determination to study and disseminate the Law, transcended the difficulties of the journey, the high mountains and the wide rivers.

Hsüan-ts'ang, after crossing the Tien-shan range, traversed West Turkistan and from there entered India—an arduous journey that he described in detail, on his return to China some ten years later, in a book called *Record of a Journey to Ta T'ang*, said to have been written the year following his return. According to his travel diary, Hsüan-ts'ang's journey to the West was one of extreme hardship and suffering. Although his fame had preceded him, even among the alien peoples of Central Asia, and although he was welcomed by them and given whatever comfort they could offer, he still could neither speak nor understand their languages, and their customs and ways of thought he found wholly unfamiliar.

In addition, there were the extreme physical hardships to be expected in so difficult a journey. After passing through such small states as Ch'ang, A Ch'i Ni, Ch'ü Chih, and Pa Lu Chia, on the northern route, he entered Tien-shan, where he found especially difficult and dangerous the crossing of Mount Ling. "I arrived at the foot of Mount Ling," he

writes, "after traversing the desert some three hundred *li* to the northwest. This was the north plateau of Ts'ung Ling [that is to say, the Pamirs], which is plentifully watered by a river flowing east. In mountains and valleys the snow remains thick and does not melt even during spring and summer. Now and then it disappears, but in no time at all it piles up and freezes again. The route is treacherous, and the cold wind is killing. Grave is the risk of meeting violent dragons, which assault travelers. People who take this route must redden their clothes, carry baskets [of provisions], and refrain from crying aloud. Those who do not obey these precepts will surely suffer from assault." Such is the tenor of the monk's writing. But what are the violent dragons he tells us assault travelers? Could it be a windstorm? On this subject, he is vividly descriptive: "When strong winds arise, sand is swirled up and stones drop from above like rain. Those who meet with such a downpour will be covered with stones, and many do not survive the experience."

The good monk is very likely not exaggerating here, for in crossing Mount Ling some of his fellow travelers were lost, as well as oxen and horses. When, after many days of such misery and suffering, he crossed the Mount Ling pass, he saw before him the limpid waters of Issik Kol. It was a beautiful sight at that moment, but Issik Kol was not, as it turned out, a lake to be taken lightly. It was not, of course, known to Hsüan-ts'ang as Issik Kol. "After four hundred *li* through the mountains," he says, "we reached the Great Clear Lake, which people call the Hot Sea or the Salt Sea. The circumference of the lake is some thousand *li*; it is long from east to west and narrow from north to south. It is altogether surrounded by mountains, and around it rivers flow one toward the other. The color of its waters is a dark blue, and the taste is bitter and salty. . . . Dragons dwell within the waters of the lake, there mysterious events are of frequent occurrence. For this reason, travelers offer sacrifices and ask for blessings in return. Though there are many fish in the lake, no one ever fishes there."

Mysterious events may be of frequent occurrence, but the monk does not tell us precisely what they are. Still, we cannot accuse him of telling untruths, for in other respects his travel diary is fearfully exact. The rea-

son the lake is called the Hot Sea is that it never freezes, and the reason it is called the Salt Sea is the great quantity of salt the water contains.

After leaving Issik Kol, Hsüan-ts'ang crossed the high Alai Tav range and then followed the River Chu into the Chu basin, where he came upon Su Yeh Castle, a citadel of the T'u-chüeh. "Some five hundred *li* northwest of the Great Clear Lake," writes the monk simply, "we arrived at Su Yeh Castle."

The belief is commonly held that this castle stood near the site of the present-day town of Tokmak. There was no other town between the lake and Tokmak, and there is no mention in the journal of Red Valley Castle, the Wu Sung citadel that presumably once stood in the vicinity. The castle where the royal Han princess lived first as queen and then as wife of the king's grandson had by then disappeared without a trace.

When Hsüan-ts'ang was there, Su Yeh Castle was the stronghold and military camp of the T'u-chüeh ruler. "The circumference of the citadel walls," writes the traveler, "is six or seven *li*, and there are to be found shops owned by people of various nations. . . . Many solitary castles may be seen far to the west of Su Yeh." Hsüan-ts'ang notes that while there he was presented to the king, who wore a robe of woven cloth dyed green; his head was bare, and his forehead was circled by a silken cloth one *jo* long, which fell in folds across his back. His attendants, numbering two hundred, wore silk brocade and knotted pigtails that fell behind. So it would seem that in the place of the now-vanished Red Valley Castle stood the prosperous Su Yeh Castle of the T'u-chüeh. At the present time, we are told, some eighty different ethnic groups dwell in Kirghizia; it could not have been so very different at the time of Hsüan Ts'ang, as his statement that there are "shops owned by people of various nations" suggests.

To the west, beyond Su Yeh, stood occasional tents that bands of nomads had pitched, and Hsüan-ts'ang, traveling on, reached Samarkand, then Afghanistan, and then continued on down the valley of the Hindu Kush to Bamiyan. From there he headed toward his final destination, which was India. There he won great fame as a holy man, and when, after another hard journey across desert and mountain, he returned home, he was given a hearty and a noisy welcome. He was

greeted at the Jade Gate by an official who had been sent from the capital to receive him, and the procession that followed kept increasing in number as it approached the capital. Hsüan-ts'ang was by now over forty years old; and until he died, at the age of ninety-odd, he spent all the intervening years translating Buddhist scriptures that he had brought back from India.

Hsüan-ts'ang crossed the Pamirs and descended to the Great Clear Lake, passed Su Yeh Castle, and then made his way toward Samarkand. What this means, on a present-day map, is that he crossed the Bedel Pass in Tien-shan and got to Issik Kol in Kirghizia, after which he headed for Samarkand, passing through the royal capital of the T'u-chüeh near Tokmak. So much, then, is clear: this whole area, from Issik Kol to Tokmak and Frunze, was a vital link in the chain of communication between East and West; this trade route played an extremely important role in world history until a very late date.

Half a century after Hsüan-ts'ang had passed this way, T'ang armies wrested Su Yeh Castle from the hands of the Western T'u-chüeh and established there an important fortified town called Sui Yeh Chen. Here, for another half-century, the T'ang armies remained, and it seems reasonable to suppose that during that time within the walls of the castle-town lived not only Chinese but also T'u-chüeh and other western peoples. It was then, for a time, an international community.

As the years go by, names like Su Yeh and Sui Yeh Chen disappear from history, and in their places rises the fortified town of Balasaghun, capital of a Turkish dynasty that, during the Karahan period, ruled the area. Balasaghun flourished from the middle of the tenth century until the fourteenth century. Most scholars agree that Balasaghun lay somewhere near present-day Tokmak, and some identify the ancient town with Ak Beshim, where Russian archaeologists are currently carrying out excavations.

It was around the middle of May that I traveled by car from Frunze, capital of Kirghizia, to Tokmak, where I wanted to have a look at the country that had once been the site of Su Yeh Castle, the Sui Yeh Chen military base, and the citadel of Balasaghun. I hoped also to visit the ruins of Ak Beshim. At Frunze, the snowcapped mountains that stand,

so to speak, in front of Tien-shan seem to be but a stone's throw away. Tokmak is only seventy-five miles from Frunze, a pleasant, leisurely two-hours' drive. The slopes of the wide Chu basin rise and fall gently, with many poplars and willows towering above the plain. Where the land is cultivated, it has a checkerboard look, square fields of barley alternating with square fields lying fallow. The road threads its way through small, scattered villages.

Tokmak itself is a quiet town, in the midst of a grassy plain, with many white houses dwarfed by huge trees that seem to shade the whole town and give it rather a gloomy look. The white particles dancing in the air are poplar seeds. I saw nothing in the town itself or in the faces of its inhabitants to suggest its link with history; only the fact that here in this region dwelt eighty different ethnic groups gave one some inkling of the centuries of history that the town had seen.

From Tokmak I went on to Ak Beshim, the ruins of which lie about three miles southwest of Staraya Pokrvka, a small village on a plateau with a highland air to it. The road was so rough it looked as though it had been washed out by a great flood. As the car zigzagged up the slope toward the plateau, there was a sharp hill to navigate and a small but swift-flowing river to ford. Then finally we reached the excavations site.

A handsome plain rolled away in all directions, as far as I could see. Since it stretches all the way to the snowcapped Alai Tav mountain range, some twenty miles distant, the peaks should have been visible, but actually that day were hidden from sight by low-hanging clouds. Here and there across the plain rose low hills, shaped rather like dumplings; within each of these mounds was an ancient ruin, but only two were being excavated at the time. Both of these were religious buildings. It was possible to make out, however, under the centuries-old accumulation of earth, the shapes of castle walls, with signal towers. The space that they enclosed was extremely large. When the whole area is excavated, I wondered, what sort of town will emerge from its earthen cover? This is the obvious thought with which one looks at partly excavated ruins. Some of the artifacts that have been found here are displayed at the local Frunze museum; others have been carried off to the Hermitage in Leningrad.

Whether or not the remains are those of Balasaghun of the Karahan dynasty is still uncertain, and the opinion of Soviet archaeologists on this point is divided. Some, such as V. Bartold and Bernshtam, insist that at present-day Ak Beshim lie the ruins of Balasaghun; others—for example, L. Kyzlasov—just as vehemently deny this identification. The point is made that although Balasaghun, according to some documents, was in existence as late as the fourteenth century, all of the artifacts removed from the Ak Beshim ruins date between the fifth and tenth centuries. Some scholars, accordingly, believe that Buran Castle, three miles southeast of Ak Beshim, is ancient Balasaghun. But this tentative identification Kyzlasov finds unacceptable also. The reason he adduces is that, during the sixteen-day siege of Balasaghun by the Kara-kitai army, some forty-seven thousand Moslems were slain; the relatively small size of Buran Castle would make it impossible, he says, for so many people to have lived within its walls. More recently, a British scholar, Crownson, advanced the theory that the present-day castle of Ak Beshim is in fact the Su Yeh Castle mentioned by Hsüan-ts'ang; this suggestion has been seconded by Krashtornui, a Soviet scholar.

It is a safe assumption that Issik Kol, the lake that lies hidden deep in the mountain crests of Tien-shan, continued to play a role in history after the time of the monk Hsüan-ts'ang. For one thing, there was the Arab invasion of the eighth century; then in the thirteenth century came the Mongol assault; and still later there was the migration of the forces of Tamerlane's army. Thus different peoples, conquerors of Central Asia, were reflected in the waters of the lake, and reflected also were the Chinese armies that, between the various invasions, passed beside the banks. Such conquerors as the Karahan forces also displayed their victorious colors at Issik Kol. Every new conqueror must have built new cities and towns around the lake: sometimes a huge city perhaps, sometimes many small and scattered villages.

There are no detailed descriptions of the region until the Arab invasion and, later, that of the armies of Tamerlane in the fourteenth century. According to documents dating from the latter period, settled villages existed beside the lake, flowers bloomed in profusion, fruit trees prospered—and on an island in the lake stood a castle. Reports tell us

that Tamerlane often came to this castle, standing on an island in a lake hidden away in the fastnesses of Tien-shan, to rest his battle-weary body, but although we know that his armies did indeed pass this way, it seems doubtful that the commander himself was here.

There is no reason, however, to doubt that there was indeed an island in the lake and that on the island stood a castle. But how, if the island was there in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, could it have disappeared without leaving any trace? When the Russians came here during the first half of the eighteenth century, they spoke only about a small number of Kirghiz tribes leading a nomadic life beside the lake. A Russian map of the time shows no sign of the island.

Then, around the middle of the nineteenth century, the area began to be investigated by Russian explorers, among whom perhaps the best-known are S. Chanshianski and N. Prejevalsky. The latter headed several major expeditions—to Mongolia, to Lop Nor, to Tibet (on foot), and to the Gobi Desert and the Ch'ing-hai. It was on a second expedition to Tibet that, at Karakor (which today is named after him), Prejevalsky died and, following the instructions in his will, was buried beside Lake Issik Kol. He must have crossed the passes of Tien-shan time and again, and in the process stopped to rest at Issik Kol—and so attractive did he find it that he chose it as his place of final rest. His choice suggests the fascination that the lake must have exerted for explorers of the region. Sven A. Hedin, a well-known Central Asian explorer, touchingly describes, in his book *The Wandering Lake*, his pilgrimage to the tomb of Prejevalsky beside Issik Kol.

Chanshianski, whose most enduring achievement is his geographical investigation of Tien-shan, was also, of course, well acquainted with Issik Kol. For him, as for Prejevalsky and Hedin, it was the springboard into East Turkistan and it was a base for many of their exploratory journeys. The mysterious events that occured at the Great Clear Lake did not engage the attention of these explorers, for whom the great mass of Tien-shan and the unknown world beyond it called with too overpowering a voice.

Yet they might, had they listened to the people who lived beside the lake instead of to the siren voices from the mountain peaks, have heard

some of the ancient legends that have been handed down from generation to generation. One story tells us that long ago, where the lake now stands, there was a fruitful plain where people lived happy, quiet lives in prosperous towns. Then one day to the towns there came a sorceress who bewitched the people so that they lost all sense of honor and shame. Towns that were once beautiful and tranquil, nestling in the Tien-shan mountains, were suddenly transformed into wanton and evil places. At this, one of the gods was so enraged that he caused a flood to inundate the towns—and when the waters subsided, there were no longer any towns, only the Great Clear Lake.

According to another legend, the lake came into being in quite a different fashion. Where it lies now, there once stood a pleasant town whose inhabitants lived an agreeable and peaceful life. Their only problem was that the town possessed but one fountain, from which all of the people who dwelt there drew their water. Now, the fountain was guarded by a holy man, who kept the key to it, and whoever wanted to draw water had first to borrow the key from the holy man and then return it to him afterwards. This was an inflexible rule, but one day a young girl got so carried away as she was exchanging endearments with her lover that she forgot to return the key. By the time the two lovers remembered, it was too late: so much water had gushed forth from the fountain that it could no longer be stopped, and soon the whole town was inundated. Before many days, it sank beneath the water—and where the town once stood there was now a lake. Other legends of the region tell, in essence, the same story: that of a populous town that was overtaken by some sudden catastrophe.

Had the explorers of the region, as they stopped to rest beside the lake, taken note of the daily life of the villagers, they would surely have been surprised, for the people ate from unfamiliar plates and they drank from unfamiliar cups—plates and cups that had come from the bottom of the lake. Some had been brought up, some were found along the banks. And it was not alone the implements the people ate and drank from but the very stuff of their houses that came out of the lake. Ancient sun-baked bricks were brought up and dried and used to construct the dwellings in the village. And perhaps the explorers heard the legends

of the lake and were shown, as proof, the human bones and the weapons that had come from the water. Perhaps they listened to the strange stories, examined the artifacts that the Great Clear Lake had so mysteriously produced, wondered anew about its mysteries—and then left Issik Kol and went on to investigate the glaciers of Tien-shan, Taklamakan, Tibet, Ch'ing-hai, Lake Lop.

Tokujirō Nishi, perhaps the first Japanese to write about Issik Kol, left Japan in 1871 to study at the University of St. Petersburg, then entered the foreign service, and finally rose to the rank of minister. But what gives him his claim to immortality is the publication—in 1886—of a book called *Records of Central Asia*, for before obeying his orders to return to Japan, he made a trip into Central Asia, visiting Samarkand, Bukhara, the Farghana basin, and (in 1880) what today is Kirghizia. Since he took the northern route, he did not himself see Issik Kol, but in his book he has this to say about it:

> People say that the lake is about a hundred and twenty miles long (from east to west) and some thirty miles wide. It is over five thousand feet above sea level; its depth is not known for certain, but some say it may be as deep as four hundred feet. The lake has no islands but many shallow banks. Its waters are clear and salty. . . . The odd thing about this lake is that there are remains of houses at its bottom. Sometimes human bones, pieces of broken bricks, and ancient artifacts are washed ashore. The tradition among the natives is that once, in ancient times, there stood here a great metropolis, with a famous well, and that one day water gushed forth from the well and inundated the whole area, and that the city sank. It is also said that the region once belonged to a green-eyed people called the Wu Sung, who built beside the lake a citadel that existed until the sixth century.

Research by the Archaeological Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. was carried out at Issik Kol in 1958, during the course of which younger members of the institute, using diving outfits, investigated the lake bottom. There they found brick piles that were probably once part of a fortified wall; they saw also a large number

of bricks heaped up as well as ancient fences and water pipes. Although they were able to bring back only a small part of all that lay on the lake bottom, their finds were nevertheless extensive and included carefully glazed bricks, ceramics with reliefs, a stone mortar, iron spearheads, and much bronze ware. They also brought up a number of bones, both human and animal, as well as weapons and agricultural implements.

The expedition continued for three years, and many of the things that divers saw when they went underwater for the first time had disappeared when they returned to bring the objects back! The investigators regretted particularly two golden ovens that eluded them. Issik Kol hid many things from the scientists who sought to pry its secrets loose —and revealed many things. The archaeologists, for example, found streets made of paving stones and the foundations of large buildings, including a good-sized brick factory. What was no longer open to doubt was that a human settlement lies at the bottom of the lake, but whether it was one large town or several small villages still remained uncertain.

Boris Zhukov, a member of the research team, in his book *Under the Waves of Issik Kol*, suggests that recurring earthquakes are the answer to the mystery of the lake, his reason being that the artifacts that have been either washed ashore or brought up belong to no single period. "It seems that no single catastrophe overtook the entire area at one given moment but rather a series of earthquakes occuring at various times and places in the region. As a result, villages subsided under water but so gradually as not to entail any great loss of life. That may be the reason that nothing points overwhelmingly, in popular tradition, to some great and dramatic catastrophe but rather to partly fanciful and only partly catastrophic phenomena. The legends, though their chief purpose is to explain the origin of the lake, frequently seem to be describing earthquakes in general."

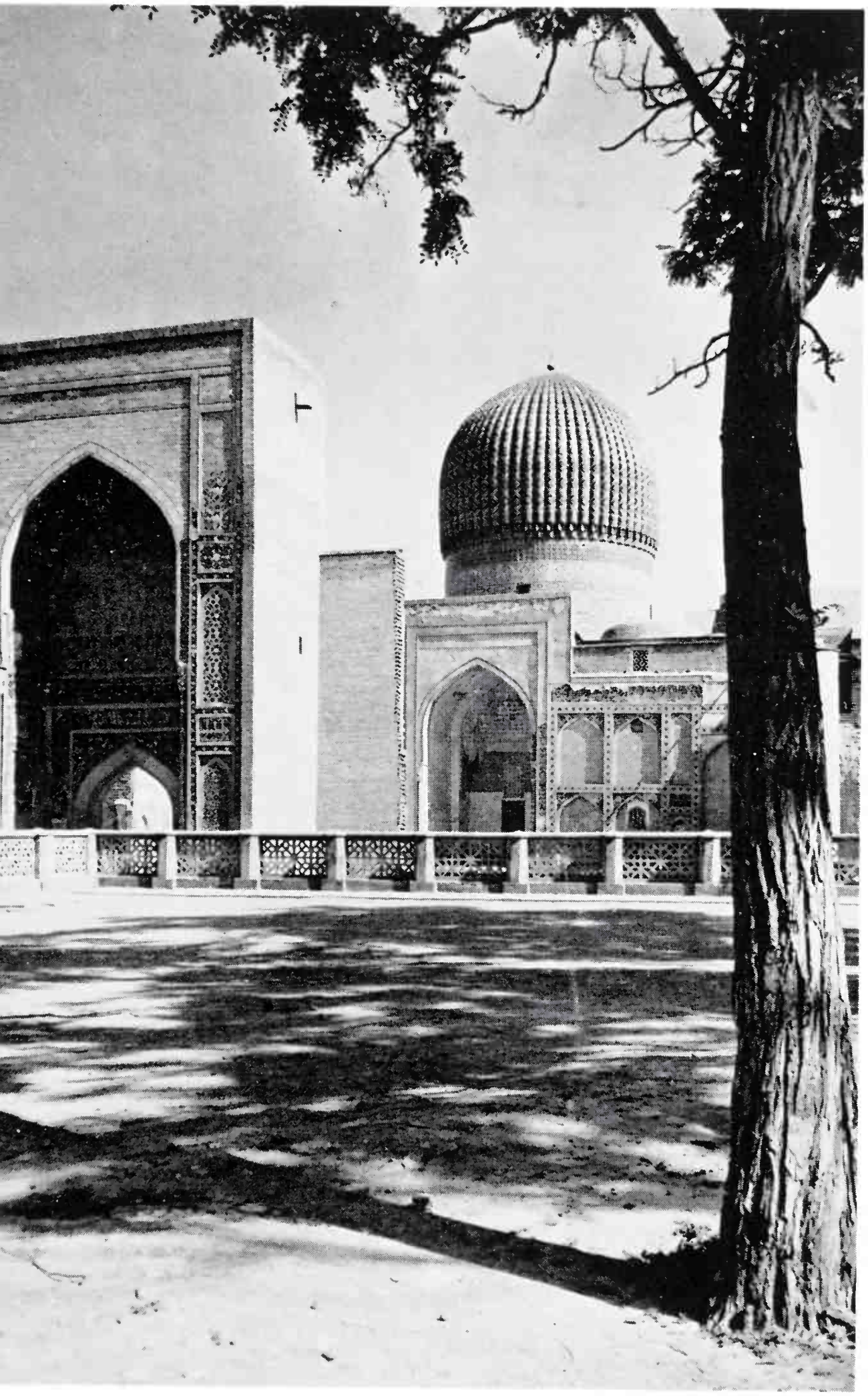
The shape of a man's eye, the lake lies caught between two snowcovered mountain ranges that tower above it like the leaves of a folding screen, and "dragons dwell within the waters of the lake, and there mysterious events are of frequent occurence. . . ." So wrote the Buddhist monk long ago, but the dragons may still be there: movements of the earth's crust may still have something to say about the shape of Issik Kol.

A mountain valley of the Tien-shan range.

A view of the Bibi-Khanym ruins, Samarkand (*previous page*).

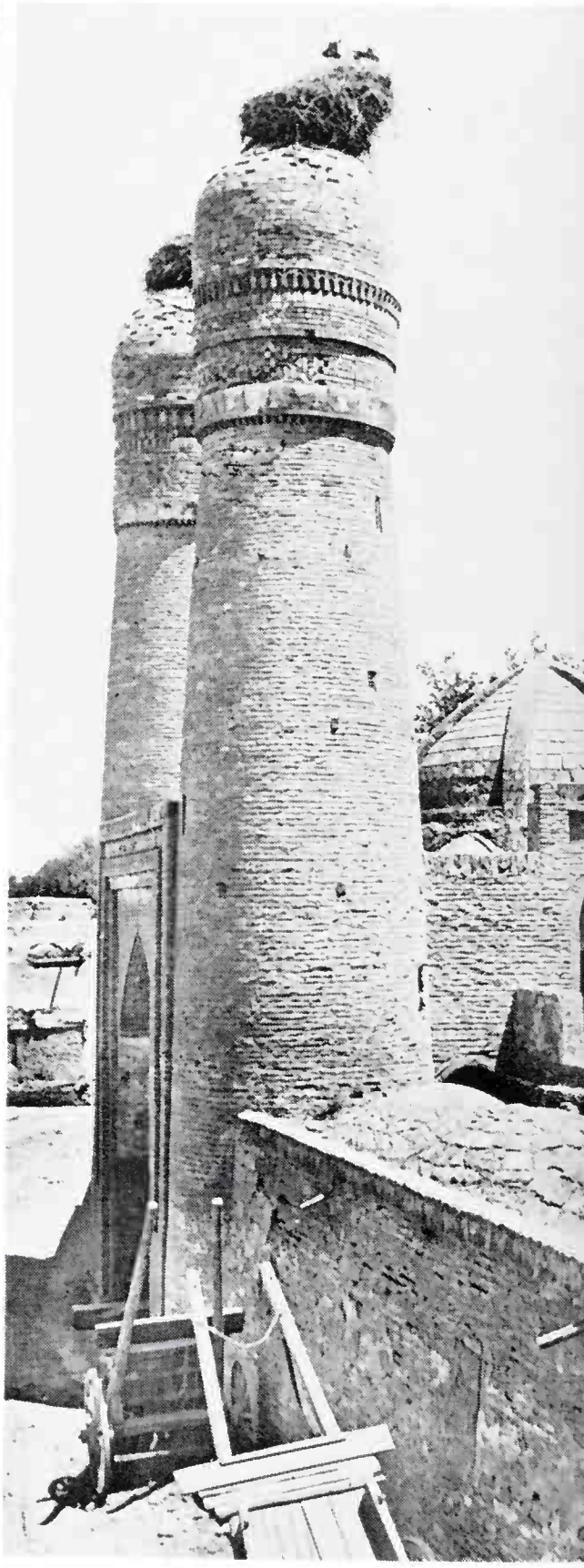
A partial view of "The Seven Oxen" by Lake Issik Kol.

The ruins of a Khiva citadel.

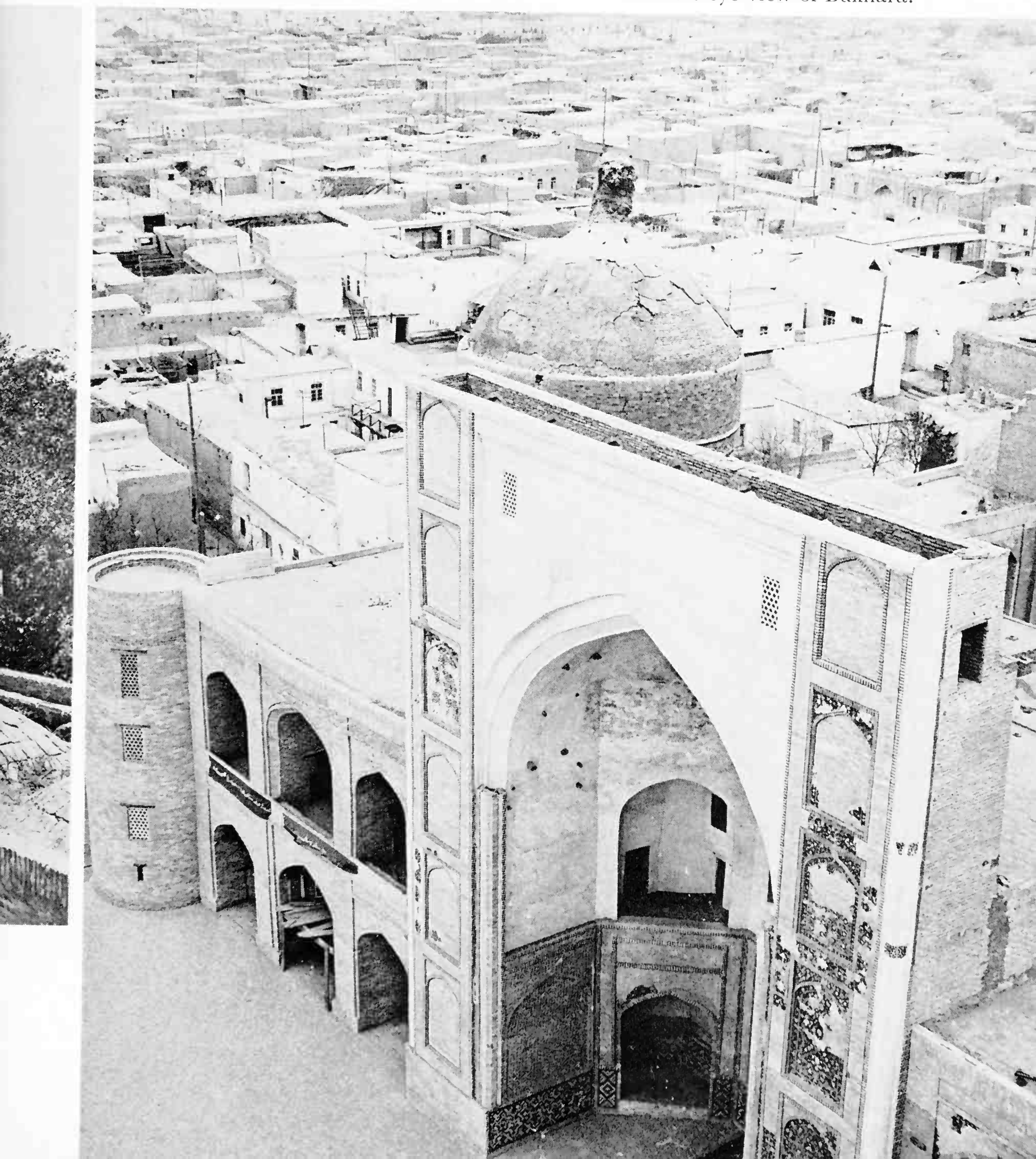


The Gur-Emir Mausoleum of the Timurid dynasty.

Storks often nest in the tops of trees and towers in Bukhara.



A bird's-eye view of Bukhara.



Spring in the Ferghana basin.

Takla-makan Desert.

Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.)

Hsüan-ts'ang San-tsang (600?-664)

Genghis Khan (1167-1227)

Tamerlane (1336-1405)

Babur (1482-1530)

The Rise and Fall of Samarkand

I

It was in 329 B.C.—the year their commander in chief celebrated his twenty-seventh birthday—that the armies of Alexander the Great entered the land of the Sogdians, that fertile Central Asian oasis area watered by the Zarafshan River, the area of present-day Samarkand and Bukhara. The social organization of the Sogdians is unknown, but the assumption is made that, as they had settled in oases, they were farmers and stock-breeders, that each oasis constituted, so to speak, a small state, and that when the small states joined forces it was in order to form an allied nation. The Sogdians were of Iranian stock.

Alexander subdued Marakand, the capital of united Sogdiana, leaving a garrison there while he himself, with the main body of his army, headed east. When he reached the Sir Darya, he established at Khodzhent a city that he called Alexandria Estata. The city was constructed remarkably quickly: within seventeen days of the completion of the walls, houses had already gone up inside them and people were already living in the houses. Very soon slaves were brought there.

Just as Alexander ended a tour of inspection of his new city, a messenger arrived from Marakand, bearing a most unexpected message. The garrison that Alexander had left at Marakand had been surprised by the Sogdian army, under the leadership of a general named Spitamen, and had been driven out of the citadel. Alexander at once sent a battalion, under the command of Menedema, to Marakand, while he himself led his army across the Sir Darya to clear the Tien-shan foothills of the nomads that dwelt there.

Then Alexander received a second message, and once again the news it contained was unexpected. On their way to Marakand, the reinforcements he had sent had encountered the Sogdian army of Spitamen, and the encounter had ended in disaster for the Alexandrian forces: two thousand infantry and three hundred cavalry had been slain. After issuing an immediate command that anyone who repeated the contents of the message would be put to death, Alexander set out himself for Marakand, taking with him the elite of his troops. He was determined, above all, to avenge the defeat that his hitherto victorious army had suffered.

Alexander reached Marakand, only to find the fortified castle deserted. Spitamen had retired with his troops some distance away in the desert. But it was not his intention meekly to remain there. With the assistance of the Masagedians, he assembled a huge force of cavalrymen, which he led back into Sogdiana. In the ensuing encounter, the army of Alexander, commanded by one of his generals, slew one hundred twenty thousand Sogdians and took numerous prisoners. Spitamen himself escaped.

Then Alexander went among the captured enemy soldiers and picked out thirty that had shown themselves to be the bravest. After he had praised their valor, he pronounced sentence of death upon them. Hearing this, the Sogdians did not cringe or grow pale; on the contrary, they appeared to rejoice in the news.

When Alexander asked them why they were pleased at being condemned to death, they replied:

"Because it is Alexander who has sentenced us, and Alexander is an unchallenged hero. There can be no greater satisfaction than that."

Hearing this reply, Alexander commuted the death sentence, enlisting four of the men into his bodyguard and sending the others home.

As the latter told of their escape from death, word of Alexander's clemency swept like wildfire through the Sogdian forces. One after another they began to desert, and Spitamen, although he continued to give battle, realized that he no longer had any hope of resisting Alexander, despite his own bravery and that of his men.

One day, when he was in his tent with his wife and his three children,

she said to him: "As there is no chance of our escaping, why should we not surrender?"

At this the children threw themselves at Spitamen's feet with the same desperate entreaty.

He looked away from them into the lovely face of his wife, and he was sure that in the back of her mind was the thought that once she was in the presence of Alexander she could captivate him with her beauty. He knew her well enough to know that such a plan would not be out of character, for she was a daring woman and at the same time a passionate one. As he looked into her eyes, he was seized with the desire to draw his sword and kill her, when suddenly he paused. "My fate is mine," he said clearly, "and you must reconcile yourself to the fact that my fate is also yours. I would rather die than surrender to Alexander."

Then there followed days of flight, bitter days for Spitamen: added to the bitterness of flight was the bitter knowledge that he could no longer trust his wife. And so it came about that one day during a banquet he drank too much and fell unconscious to the floor. His wife carried him to bed and was about to leave him there when she paused for a moment, then returned to the bed, took the sword that still hung from his waist, and with it cut off his head.

Then, carrying with her the head of her husband, she went to Alexander's tent. The commander, astonished, was torn by conflicting emotions, for Spitamen had been a constant threat to him, and a source of vexation that only death could remove, yet at the same time that he was pleased by the death of the Sogdian general, and pleased also by the beauty and bravery of the general's wife, he could not condone the grievous sin she had committed when she took her husband's life. After but a moment's thought, he cried:

"I shall not have you put to death. Go anywhere you like—only leave my camp."

The woman had no choice but to obey. Nor was there any place to go but the desert. She was never seen or heard of again, as was only to be expected.

Although Spitamen was dead, Sogdian resistance continued, and

now Alexander, in an effort to combat it, encouraged his troops to marry Sogdian women. "Union between Macedonians and natives," he said, "is essential to the domination of the area. Only in that way can the shame of the defeated and the pride of the conquerors be erased."

Alexander himself followed his own advice. One day he was visiting a region where a former Sogdian general named Oxyartes now governed as prefect. The general gave a feast in honor of Alexander, and among the thirty beautiful girls who served at the feast was Oxyartes's own daughter, Roxana, whom Alexander found extremely beautiful. He determined to marry her despite the fact that he already had three wives—the queen of Persia and two Persian princesses—and despite the fact also that Roxana was not of royal blood. Being Alexander, he took her to wife.

This information comes from the section on the Sogdians in a biography of Alexander written by Quintus Lucretius Rufus, a Roman historian of the first century. What concerns us here is the reference to Marakand as the capital of the Sogdians, for modern scholarship now generally identifies Marakand as ancient Samarkand. Nonetheless, questions arise. Was the site of Marakand—that is to say, ancient Samarkand—the same as present-day Samarkand? Or was it nearby?

V. Shyshkin, the Soviet archaeologist, is of the opinion that Marakand stood on the site of the famous ruins of Afrashab Castle, at the northern end of present-day Samarkand. "So far no documents," he writes, "have been discovered that prove Marakand once stood on the site of Afrashab, but in view of the fact that the lower level of the remains of the walled city dates from before the Greco-Macedonian invasion under Alexander, one may surmise that the fortified city of Marakand referred to by Greek and Roman writers stood on that particular site and occupied all or part of the remains of the walled city existing today." Shyshkin, who devoted the last years of his life to the Afrashab excavation, died at Samarkand in the spring of 1967.

I was at Afrashab in May, 1965, but my desire to meet Shyshkin was foiled by a one day's difference in our respective schedules. However, I did visit the excavations then in progress, and I saw the seventh-

century wall paintings that had just been discovered. The view from the site was merely that of a vast, sprawling plain covered with summer grass; in the distance rose a hill at the top of which stood the famous Uzbek observatory.

It was only recently that scholars realized that this was the site of ancient Samarkand, for after the invasion by the Mongols in the thirteenth century the site was completely abandoned and new Samarkand was founded not far away, in the place where it still stands. Thus, within a mere seven hundred years old Samarkand had altogether disappeared from the memory of men who lived in the region, although they knew that there was something special about the place, for shepherds were always finding bits of jewelry and precious stones that seemed to have come from underground. What finally impelled archaeologists to excavate there was the discovery, by a gang of road workers, of what appeared to be underground ruins; and it was in the year 1958 that the Uzbek Science Academy began major excavations.

All over the world scholars impatiently awaited the results, eager for an indication of what thirteenth-century Samarkand looked like after its devastation by the Mongols. What actually came to light, however, were the ruins of seventh-century Samarkand: the thirteenth-century city had disappeared without leaving a trace behind, as had the city of the tenth century. The uppermost level was found to date from the seventh century, and below it, as further excavations made clear, lay more ancient cities, including those that dated from before and after the first century—although everything that was brought to light could be attributed to Sogdian civilization. The conclusion seems inescapable, then, that Afrashab, although there are no written records to prove it, was indeed Marakand, the Sogdian capital.

Standing at Afrashab and looking to the west, one sees, across the rolling plain, the present-day town of Samarkand, surrounded by green trees. Further off rears a mountain range, with long transverse crests and with a center peak that is not unlike Mount Fuji. To the northeast rise two low, intersecting ranges. Thus, ancient Samarkand flourished on an ample plateau, surrounded on all sides by mountains; but the site does not give one a cramped feeling, for the plain is wide and the

mountains seem distant. The plateau on which the city was built is much higher than that of Samarkand today, so its citizens must have had splendid, year-round views of the distant and mysterious mountains. The terrain suggests, further, that the people may have built their houses on slopes.

Leaving such considerations aside, we must ask ourselves what future lay in store for the Sogdians after the departure of the conquering army of Alexander. And what was to befall their capital city, Marakand?

A stellar appearance of the Sogdians on the international stage occurred in the fourth and fifth centuries, but for the period between that and the appearance of Alexander the history books are blank. After Alexander's departure, Central Asia was for a time part of the Seleucid kingdom, then fell under Bactrian domination, and still later acknowledged the sovereignty of the Kushan dynasty; and the inference seems obvious that Sogdiana, along with Samarkand, was not untouched by the waves of history that swept over the region. Archaeological studies indicate that Samarkand enjoyed a period of prosperity in the first century A.D., then around the third or fourth centuries fell into a decline. This means, then, if the archaeological evidence is to be believed, that after its destruction by the armies of Alexander, the city was restored in the first century, at which time the Sogdians achieved a high degree of civilization; then, in the third and fourth centuries, the devastations of war once again reduced it to ruin.

Thereafter, from the middle of the fifth century, Central Asia fell under one master after another. At one time it was controlled by the Ephthalites, then again by the T'u-chüeh. It was during this period—that is, from the middle of the fifth century until the seventh century—that the Sogdians made their first major appearance in the theater of history. Samarkand, the name of their capital city, is frequently mentioned in historical records of the period. Although they were under the domination of foreign rulers, the Sogdians were permitted, wherever they lived, to function as independent principalities and to retain a large degree of freedom.

During the seventh century, two Chinese, in describing Samarkand, are impressed by the high cultural level of the Sogdian inhabitants of

the city. One of the two was Wei Chieh, who had been sent as an emissary of the Sui state to Central Asia and India; the other, a little later on, was Hsüan-ts'ang, whom we have already encountered on his pious journey to India and back again.

The *Sui Chronicles* gives the names of such western Turkistan communities as K'ang, Shih, and Nü, and it seems reasonable to assume that these are based upon reports made by Wei Chieh. "The king of K'ang [Samarkand]," he writes, "is kindly and well loved by his people. His wife is the daughter of the T'u-chüeh king. The nation is governed by three ministers, each with his own powers, and it is known throughout Central Asia as a powerful country. The people have deep-set eyes, high noses, and full beards. They are good at business, and the city is always filled with foreign traders. The people play many kinds of musical instruments—drums large and small, flutes, and five-stringed lutes. In the sixth month June they have a great festival at the mausoleum of their ancestors, and people come from all over the country to help celebrate this festival."

In Hsüan-ts'ang's journal, Samarkand is referred to not as K'ang but as Sa Mo Chien. He writes: "The castle here is very sturdily constructed, the population is large, and merchandise from many countries is to be found there. The soil is fertile, the orchards are fruitful, the horses are excellent, and the craftsmanship of the artisans is superior to that of other countries. Here is the heart of Central Asia. The people are courteous and follow prescribed rules of conduct, the king is courageous, soldiers and horses alike are powerful. When they go to war, the soldiers are unquestioningly ready to give their lives for their country: it is never, therefore, invaded." This is the nation that the Sogdians, defeated by Alexander around 300 B.C., had built by the time of Hsüan-ts'ang.

There is no question that between the fifth century and the seventh the Sogdians attained an extremely high level of civilization. Eloquent proof of this is given by some seventh-century wall paintings that, when I visited Afrashab, were just being excavated. Men gorgeously dressed in fine clothes ride forward on elephants, camels, and horses, while a crowd waits to welcome them. There are three women on horseback;

the women wear yellow pantaloons and short red skirts, with long black shoes; on their arms are elaborate bracelets. Warriors carry swords both long and short at their waists; they cover the lower part of their faces with white cloth, which gives them a dashing look. The content of the paintings indicates a highly evolved culture, just as the technique of the painters demonstrates an extremely high level of artistic achievement.

At that time, the Sogdians made use of their own alphabet, which was first rediscovered, in the form of sentences written by them, in Tunhuang, then later in the ruins of the Mount Mug citadel, which lay in a Sogdian district. The inscriptions, when finally deciphered, threw considerable light upon Sogdian civilization, which, until then, had been virtually unknown.

That the Sogdians of the period maintained international relations over a wide area is demonstrated by the fact that documents relating to the Sogdian language have been found in Mongolia, on the right bank of the Amu Darya, and in India. It is evident, then, that the Sogdians had traveled not only throughout East and West Turkistan but as far as distant India. Although not a wholly independent nation, they attained a high degree of culture and were widely known as skillful traders. Their religion consisted chiefly of fire worship, and morning and night they visited shrines dedicated to the deity of fire. The well-to-do among them, it seems safe to say, lived in comfortable rooms that were more luxuriously furnished and decorated than in any other contemporary city of Central Asia.

II

Now the wheel of history turned again, and flourishing seventh-century Sogdiana was put to the torch, and the whole land of the Sogdians was consumed by black tongues of fire. At the end of the seventh century the invading armies of the Arabs entered the land, and for a century and a half the Sogdians fought them. Sogdians conscripted into the Arab armies had to fight, and slay or be slain by, their own brothers; all

the great cities of the Sogdians were burned to the ground, and new cities were founded to take their place; the people were subjected to forced conversion to Islam; many were taken away to be slaves; those who could no longer tolerate Arab oppression voluntarily surrendered the land of their forefathers; and many other terrible things befell these admirable and righteous people.

Little is to be found in the history books about their life during this long period of struggle against the Arabs and Arab domination. The most revealing information we have comes from below the ground, in large part from excavations made in Tajikistan, where it was revealed that the Sogdians had built a castle atop Mount Mug, in the upper reaches of the Zarafshan River at what may be thought of as an entrance to the Pamirs. Discovery of the site was first made by a shepherd, who found a stick with strange writing on it (which turned out to be Sogdian). Natives of the region had called the citadel Mug Castle and had imagined that all sorts of important secrets were buried there.

Excavations brought to light a large number of extremely varied artifacts: textiles made from local cotton and cotton thread, various kinds of twisted thread, sheets of felt, leather goods, a lovely small basket made of woven willow branches, a wooden sheath for a sword, a spear with the figure of a Sogdian warrior painted on it, some arrows, a small lacquered box from China, and also some documents written in the Sogdian language.

Once this dig was completed, it was learned that natives of the region believed that other important secrets were hidden under a hill near Pyanjikent, a little further down on the banks of the same Zarafshan. Exploratory excavations, accordingly, were made at the site, which soon revealed that a major city was hidden there. This, when the excavations were completed, turned out to be ancient Pyanjikent.

The two sites were not unconnected. Sogdians who could no longer bear the oppressive measures of the invading Arabs determined to flee their city of Pyanjikent and take refuge in distant Farghana. Before implementing this removal—or, to be more precise, this flight—of the entire city, they carried their belongings to the top of Mount Mug, to conceal them from the eyes of the Arabs. But their artifice was not des-

tined to save them: the people of Pyanjikent, although willing to surrender the land of their ancestors, were doomed to perish on Mount Mug at the hands of the Arab invaders. That is the tale told by the excavations: ancient Pyanjikent, after it was dug up, turned out to be the city abandoned by the Sogdians, while the citadel atop Mount Mug was revealed as the place where they were fated to meet their tragic end.

Nor was it only the inhabitants of Pyanjikent who proposed a mass exodus. The people of Samarkand, during that same period, devised a similar plan—and met a similar tragic fate. They moved up from Samarkand toward the Farghana basin, but at the town of Khodzhent, at the entrance to the basin, they were overtaken by the Arab armies and were wholly destroyed. These two sites give eloquent testimony of the torment the Sogdians underwent in their struggles against the Arabs. Samarkand, Bukhara, and Pyanjikent, three seventh-century Sogdian cities standing today, were all wiped out by the Arabs around the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth. The ashes of Samarkand were deposited in the land of Afrashab and have altogether disappeared; those of Pyanjikent were, fortunately for us, buried deep under a hill near the present-day town that bears the same name.

Standing at the site of the ruins of ancient Pyanjikent, one observes that the regions in which the Sogdians founded their towns all had certain characteristics in common. First, the towns are built on elevated plateaus, from which nothing obstructs the field of vision; and all around, hills so low they can hardly be called hills roll gently on. This is an accurate description of both Samarkand and Pyanjikent. Second, far in the distance, beyond the wide, rolling plateaus, mountain ranges rise quietly up to snowcapped peaks. This was the kind of land in which the Sogdians chose to build their walled cities.

Here they settled down, living within the walls, cultivating the land that stretched out in all directions on the surrounding plateau. At day's end, as the sun sank slowly behind the distant mountains, the fields that the Sogdian farmers had been tending, reddened by the sun, turned the color of blood. As a general rule, little snow fell on the towns themselves, but in the distance—all the year around—reared the snowy summits of the mountains. Whether cultivating their land or walking

the streets of their cities or standing before one of the altars dedicated to fire, the Sogdians had only to lift their eyes to see the distant white peaks.

Let us examine Pyanjikent for a moment in greater detail. The ancient city stood at one corner of a vast plain, with the Zarafshan range towering close by, and in the far distance the great peaks of Turkistan fronted by their foothills. Present-day Pyanjikent stands beside the river that flows down the valley between the high mountains of Zarafshan and its foothills, while the ancient city stood just beyond the point where the vast plain sinks sharply onto the lowland of the Zarafshan. Here the town ran no danger of being flooded, and at the same time the situation was an advantageous one, when necessary, both for offensive and defensive war, with a sharp cliff on one side and a wide plain on the other. Further, it was undeniably an aesthetically pleasing site for a town and a royal castle.

The total area of the excavated city is about forty-seven acres. If we suppose the population to have been somewhere between two and three thousand souls, then the town must have been rather crowded. However, excavations have not been completed; when they are, the size of the town will obviously have to be revised considerably upward.

The ancient town that now lies exposed resembles a series of trenches; numerous ruined houses, with streets between them gape like open mouths. If Pyanjikent is to be restored, sun-dried brick walls will have to rise on the ancient foundations and the streets will have to be paved with stones. We stroll through what was probably the market area looking at the ruins of houses, too many to count, and we wonder what they were like when they were whole and new. Some must have been two-storied, for there are remains of stairways. The main street of the town, we note, is not especially wide: four or five men at most might have walked abreast. Lesser streets intersect it, and intersect one another, forming charming crossroads here and there.

At the end of one of the paths once stood some steps; mounting them, one would have arrived at an arched gate—a gate that would have seemed most attractive when covered with vines. Beyond the gate is a space that may well have been a back garden; we look at it now and

try to reconstruct the afternoon scene, the peaceful Sogdian family together at a table drinking tea, or an old woman weeding a flower bed; or in the evening perhaps a pair of young lovers whispering in a shadowy corner.

Some distance away from the market area is the altar consecrated to the worship of fire. In addition, the town boasts a large warehouse and a bazaar. In a far corner stands the royal palace: in it we admire a large room decorated with handsome wall paintings.

Such was the lovely town of Pyanjikent that, at the beginning of the eighth century, was destined to suffer the tragic fate of total annihilation. We call it a town, but in fact it was more like a city-state, a principality, an independent nation, than like a town—as were both Samarkand and Bukhara. The lord of Pyanjikent in its time of trial was a man named Diwaschtich.

Shall we be able to put together a coherent picture of this prince? It should be possible, making use of all the materials available to us: the artifacts found at the citadel of Mount Mug as well as at Pyanjikent, the long leather shoes, the precious stones, the painting of two nobles, the shield painting of a warrior, and then letters that Diwaschtich himself wrote to his emissary among the Arabs. If I try to put all these materials together, I see a powerful-looking man who somewhat resembles Prince Shōtoku of Japan, that saintly personage who was so instrumental in the introduction of Buddhism and the establishment of a "constitutional" government in ancient Japan. The prince of Pyanjikent wears an elaborate beard, and on his head sits a crown encrusted with precious stones. His clothes are tight fitting and richly embroidered. At his narrow waist hangs a thin sword that looks like a walking stick. Sitting in one of his royal apartments, Diwaschtich looks very elegant indeed.

He was an important man, this Diwaschtich, for it is clear now, from manuscripts discovered at Mount Mug, that in addition to being prince of Pyanjikent, he was also lord of Samarkand and leader of the Zarafshan alliance, which consisted of several city-states.

Nevertheless, it was many years since Diwaschtich had had a good night's sleep—all the years, in fact, since the Arab armies had begun

their invasion and the Sogdian principalities had fallen under their sway. Now, through his emissary to the Arab command, fresh demands were brought to him every third day, and Diwaschtich had no choice but to accede, however outrageous the demands might be, whether for food or goods or men to be conscripted into the Arab armies. Diwaschtich was forced to spend all his time and energy attempting to meet those demands. Further, the Arabs dealt out such punishment as they chose, and the Sogdians could say nothing in return. Most unbearable of all, perhaps, the Arabs required the conquered people to be forcibly converted to the religion of Mohammed.

Out of his despair, one day, Diwaschtich evolved a plan: let all the inhabitants of Pyanjikent leave their city and attempt to begin a new life in the high crests of the Pamirs, where the Arab armies would be powerless to reach them. None of the citizens opposed Diwaschtich's plan; in fact they began, that very day and in the greatest of secrecy, to implement it. They determined to carry their most valuable possessions up to the fortress on Mount Mug, burying the things there in the hope that some day they would be able to return and dig them up. Better, they said, to bury them than to leave them for the Arabs.

In this manner, the precious possessions of the Sogdians began surreptitiously to disappear from the town; and although each day the cruel Arab masters, bureaucrats and soldiers, patrolled the streets of the city, not one of them perceived the stealthy removal of the wealth of Pyanjikent. This preparatory process must have gone on for six months or a year, or perhaps even longer. Then one night, in the darkness of midnight, the Sogdians of Pyanjikent, two or three thousand of them, including their women and their children, silently fled the land of their ancestors and in a long file headed for the high Pamirs.

Alas, they were doomed to failure. Soon, perhaps no more than two or three days after they left the town, they learned that Arab horsemen were in pursuit. Word was quickly passed to all the refugees, who now changed the direction of their march and prepared, for they had no choice, to give battle to their pursuers. They hurriedly dug themselves into the citadel of Mug and had hardly completed their hasty preparations when a huge Arab army invested the citadel. The attacking force

was made up not only of Arabs but of various peoples from the river basins of Central Asia who had been conscripted by Arab officers.

Diwaschtich was in command of the Sogdian army—and a brave army it was, composed of descendants of the courageous men who had fought the forces of Alexander all those centuries ago and who had not been easily vanquished. The indomitable blood of Spitamen, who had preferred death to surrender, still flowed in their veins; and in their hearts was the knowledge that they were the living embodiments of a long and glorious history, a history of a people subjected to much war and suffering who had yet managed to survive.

But there are battles that can be fought and won—and there is always a battle that can never be won. For the people of Pyanjikent the doom of an irrevocably lost battle had lain waiting since time immemorial. The battle that the Sogdians fought against the invading Arabs outside the walls of the citadel was fated to end in their defeat. Even today, twelve hundred years later, we can still see the gallant figure of Diwaschtich as he commanded his outnumbered army: he could not have looked very unlike the figure of a mounted Sogdian warrior on a shield excavated from the ruins of Mug.

Diwaschtich fled with the remnants of his defeated army into the citadel, and there, in the hope of saving the women and the children, the old men and the few surviving soldiers, he attempted to negotiate with the besiegers. To this end he went himself, the day following the retreat, to the camp of the Arab commanders—and there was taken captive and beheaded. Very soon the Sogdians within the castle walls, having lost their leader, surrendered: they opened the fortress gate, begging only that the conquerors spare the lives of one hundred families. How the Sogdians met this fresh tragedy we do not know, nor do we know whether the Arabs were so gracious as to spare those hundred families.

At much the same time that Pyanjikent underwent its tragic doom, much the same fate overtook Samarkand, whose citizens also abandoned their town and sought refuge elsewhere—this time in the Farghana basin; but at Khodzhent, the entrance to the basin, they too were overtaken by an Arab army and all were slain.

Coincidentally, just as these tragic events were taking place at Khodzhent, another band of Sogdians appeared there, after having crossed the Pamirs. These were merchants returning from China who had not even heard of the Arab invasion, and as they had had nothing to do with the events that led to the slaughter of the people of Samarkand, their lives were spared.

What befell Pyanjikent after its desertion by its people is unknown to history. Probably, being now a land that belonged to no one, it was pillaged and destroyed by Arab soldiers. But even with all the violence for which these soldiers were notorious, so fair and great a city could not have disappeared without a trace, nor did it—and now we may walk the ruined main street of the excavated city, we may stand at the remains of the bazaar, we may look at what is left of the fire shrine and try to picture to ourselves how ancient Pyanjikent looked, what the lives of its people were like, and what they did until devastation overtook them.

After twenty years of excavation and study, Russian archaeologists are now of the opinion that even after Pyanjikent was abandoned by Diwaschtich and his followers, smoke still continued to rise from a few hearths, perhaps only a very few indeed. (The archaeologists place the date of the final and absolute death of the town at around the year 770.) I find the sight of that smoke heartening, for it seems to mean that some of the Sogdians who retreated into the citadel at Mug were spared and were permitted to return to the town that was theirs. Thus, not until these few survivors died did the town itself die: there was no longer any need for the dead Sogdians to return to their dead city, haunted with such unhappy memories.

III

By springtime of the year 1206 Genghis Khan had completed the process of bringing under his control all the nomadic tribes that roamed the Mongolian plateau. Above his own tent, in the upper reaches of

the Amu Darya, he hoisted enormous flags, each with nine white streamers, and he ordained a great celebration in his own honor, proclaiming himself the lord and master of the whole Mongolian plateau —its mightiest monarch. All the nomadic tribes sent emissaries to take part in the celebration; the number of these was several thousand.

Now, using this conquest as a springboard, Genghis Khan began his invasion of other Mongol countries. His cavalry were more like ravenous wolves than mounted men, and everywhere the fires that they started grew into huge conflagrations, burning everything they touched, turning every place into a no-man's-land. In 1209 they took Hsi Hsia; from 1211 to 1216 they made repeated incursions into China (then known as Chin), crossing the Great Wall and trampling the whole country under the hooves of their horses.

It was not until the summer of 1218 that Genghis Khan turned his glittering eyes in the direction of West Turkistan. He marched first against the people of Kara-kitai and within three months had subdued them. Spoils of war—unfamiliar fruit, wine, carpets, finely handcrafted articles—were sent across the desert to the Mongolian plateau.

The conquest of the Kara-kitai was indeed a splendid thing, but a still more splendid attraction lay beyond, the land of Khorezm. But here Genghis Khan felt the need for caution; he was wary of marching his army into a land where a huge Moslem force was encamped. Accordingly, he first attempted to establish friendly relations by peaceful means. Some four hundred and fifty men, chosen from reigning families and general officers, were formed into a group and sent, as a caravan, into the desert country. But when the caravan reached Otrar, on the banks of the Sir Darya, all four hundred and fifty were put to the sword by Gailkhan, the defending general of the region, and all the merchandise they carried was plundered. How could Gailkhan have anticipated the consequences of his act? As a result of it, all of West Turkistan was to be subjected during the coming years to acts of vengeance thitherto unheard of in the annals of mankind.

In 1218, Genghis Khan assembled the members of his family, his chief ministers, and the elders among his advisers, and announced his intention of marching against Khorezm. The following year, accord-

ingly, an army of two hundred thousand Mongol soldiers left their plateau and, like an enormous pack of wolves, galloped across the Altai mountains. All that summer, while they moved, Genghis Khan himself remained encamped beside the Irtishi River, where he carefully watched developments at Khorezm. An army of four hundred thousand had been garrisoned at the many citadels that guarded the land of Khorezm along the Sir Darya, which, as we have noted, rose in Tien-shan and flowed down to the Aral Sea.

When autumn came, Genghis Khan ordered his entire army to assault the northeastern frontier of Khorezm. Juchi, his eldest son, was to command the forces of the First Army and was to lead them downstream; Chaghatai and Ogodai, his second and third sons, were to share command of the Second Army, leading it against the city of Otrar. Young Mongol general officers were put in charge of the Third Army and were instructed to head upstream; while Tului, the fourth son of Genghis Khan, was to lead the Fourth Army against Bukhara, where a number of the forces of Khorezm were entrenched. Before giving the signal to begin operations, Genghis Khan issued two general orders intended to make his intentions clear to all his men: hostilities were to continue until Muhammad, shah of Khorezm, was slain; and people who surrendered were to be spared while all others, be they soldiers or civilians, women or children, young or old, were to be altogether destroyed. His last order was to appoint his son Ogodai to be his heir—for Genghis Khan realized that he was staking his own life also on this adventure.

He himself joined the Fourth Army, led by Tului, which was to assault Bukhara. For a month they marched through the desert, until at last they arrived at the first fortress, which was called Zernuk. There, before the gate of the fortress, Genghis Khan caused a herald to announce in a loud voice: "The mighty Mongolian army stands before you. If you offer the slightest resistance, this fortress and all your dwellings will be destroyed at once. If you surrender, your lives and property will be spared."

No resistance came from within. The proclamation sufficed. After all the citizens had issued forth from the gate, the young men were con-

scripted into the army, while the rest were permitted to return to their homes. Then, for three days, the town was ransacked and everything of value was appropriated by the army, after which all the fortress walls were torn down.

A second march, which also lasted for a month, brought the Mongols to the fortified town of Nuhr, where the same proclamation was hurled at the defenders of the castle and where the same speedy capitulation followed. Now the way to Bukhara lay open, and the enormous force of Mongol cavalry headed directly for it. While they were en route, the year 1219 came to an end, and by the time the army reached the outskirts of Bukhara, it was the middle of January.

Here, once again, notice to surrender was served upon the defenders within the town. Although these numbered but twenty thousand, as against the huge Mongol force that now besieged Bukhara, they refused to surrender. The greater part of the force within the city tried to gain an immediate advantage by rushing the invaders, but they were cut down. Every man of them was killed—the engagement occured beside the Amu Darya—and the waters of the river were dyed red.

Now the Mongol army turned its attentions back to the city itself. Although it was now defended by only four thousand men, they managed to hold out for three days against the invading host. Then the fortress fell, the soldiers were slain, and the citizens of the town, driven out, were permitted to bring with them only the clothes they wore; the women were given to the soldiers and the men were conscripted into the army; all property was confiscated, and after the town was emptied of everything of value, it was set aflame. Thus Bukhara was reduced to ashes, and the conquering Mongol army, leaving behind the ghastly, smoking, lifeless ruins, headed for a still greater fortified city, Samarkand.

But before having a look at Samarkand at this particular moment in its history, we must return briefly to the Sogdians, those inhabitants of the region with their capitals at Bukhara and Samarkand, and see what befell them after the Arab invasion of the eighth century.

Memories of the massacre of the citizens of both Pyanjikent and Samarkand, after their unsuccessful attempts to flee their cities, per-

sisted long after the Arab invasion itself; but the Sogdians lived with the memories and survived Arab brutality without falling wholly under the sway of the invaders. The Arabs appointed one of their number as a viceroy, and thus, while the Sogdians remained nominally under Arab hegemony, they regained, for all practical purposes, their independence and were able to return once more to their earlier peaceful life.

Among the rulers appointed by the Arabs, the Samanids were notable; and it was under this dynasty that the Sogdians began to free themselves from the oppressive Arab rule and to rediscover their own culture, making use of their own native talents. Samarkand was the first capital of the Samanid dynasty, but at the close of the ninth century the capital was transferred to Bukhara.

Thus, during the period from the mid-ninth to the tenth century, the land where the Sogdians had dwelt was gradually restored from its ruinous state, and both Bukhara and Samarkand reemerged as great desert cities. It was during this period also that the name of the land was changed from its natural appelation of Sogdiana to Mawara-al-Nahr—which means "the land beyond the river."

The country between the Amu Darya and the Sir Darya had thus become the land where the Sogdians now dwelt, and in it they founded several towns. It is interesting to note, in connection with the change of name of the area, that the Sogdians no longer used their traditional alphabet; even the language itself began to disappear; and the passing of the alphabet and the language presaged the passing of the people themselves. No one can say at what precise moment in history the Sogdians as a separate entity ceased to exist, but gradually, by marrying other peoples who lived in the area, they became absorbed into other nations and lost their individuality. At the present day, the chief ethnic groups that inhabit this river area are the Uzbeks and the Tajiks—but their ancestors are, of course, Sogdians.

While the peaceful land flourished, the power of the Samanids declined, and in their place the shahs of Khorezm, a Moslem union, held the reins of power in West Turkistan and were lords of Samarkand and Bukhara in the land between the rivers.

Since the Khorezm, a desert people with a powerful army and a high degree of culture, flourished during this period, it was only natural that the two vassal cities, Samarkand and Bukhara, should have flourished also and attained—those two "flower-blooming cities"—unprecedented heights of prosperity. Before it was invaded by the Mongol armies, Samarkand was one of the best-built and most modern cities of its time, with an internationally minded populace and a remarkably well-developed civilization.

This picture of an ancient and highly cultured city of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is not, of course, to be seen in present-day Afrashab, although the extent of its remarkable city planning has emerged from recent archaeological investigations. Shyshkin, in his book on Afrashab, quotes a brief description written by a traveler to Samarkand at the time: "No man has ever either seen or described a picture so beautiful as that of the city—fresh green, sparkling castle, flowing canal, and endless cultivated land."

The Samanid mausoleum in Bukhara gives us some idea today of the beauty and refinement of Samarkand building of the time. The mausoleum, the only existing remains from the great days of the Samanid dynasty, is made of fired brick. All four sides are sculptured in small floral designs, and all four sides are so alike that architects are unable to hazard a guess as to which was the front of the building. Since colored bricks were not in use at the time, the builders tried to give the effect of light and shadow by means of the angles and depths of the sculpture. The overall impression, perhaps because of this, is of a slightly pinkish gray. More than three hundred different decorative techniques are said to have been used in the construction of the building, generally considered to be the finest and most beautiful in all of Central Asia. My own first impression was of a small, indescribably beautiful jewel box; then, on my way back, when I turned around, I felt the building looked like a Japanese confection—so delicate it seemed, so fragile, so lovely.

From this one remaining structure, the Samanid mausoleum, we must conjecture what all of Samarkand looked like at the time, with its palaces and temples and public buildings, its vine-covered houses

and flower gardens, its tree-shaded streets, its rows and rows of brick and pottery factories. From the density of the houses and the size of the public squares, Shyshkin estimates the population of Samarkand at that time to have been between one hundred fifty and two hundred thousand.

This was the city upon which the great horde of the Mongol army was about to descend with the customary ultimatum: if the people of the city were to choose surrender, well and good; if they were to offer even token resistance, they and their city would be utterly destroyed. At that moment the huge army was approaching along both banks of the Sir Darya.

How great was the defensive force of the Khorezm garrisoned at Samarkand? A. C. M. d'Ohsson, in his well-known *History of Mongolia*, estimates the number to have been around forty thousand; but other scholars give other estimates, depending on which ancient sources they have taken for their authority. V. Bartold, a distinguished historian of the Central Asian region who died some thirty years ago, suggests a number of possibilities in his voluminous work, *Turkistan at the Time of the Mongolian Invasion*. Ancient records, as I say, vary considerably: one gives a figure of one hundred ten thousand men and twenty elephants; others set the size of the defending forces at forty thousand, fifty thousand, and seventy thousand; still another says that there were sixty thousand men including Turks, Tajiks, Khalajis, and Karlukhs. Whatever the truth may have been, all the estimates testify to the fact that Khorezm had amassed a sizable number of troops at Samarkand in preparation for the Mongol attack.

Of the city and the invading horde, d'Ohsson writes:

> The traveler entering the Zarafshan river area is enraptured by the view that lies before him of orchards, fields blooming with flowers, branches of trees heavy with fruit, and rustic cottages all about. Onto such a scene did the Mongol horsemen make their entry. On their way to this beautiful and splendid walled city, however, Genghis Khan ordered some of the troops to head for the two neighboring cities while the main force invested Samar-

kand. All the men of Bukhara were brought here for the attack on Samarkand, but those who dropped out of the ranks through exhaustion were killed.

Unfortunately, we cannot, for an account of the invasion, turn to *The Factual Records of Genghis Khan*, a work that was edited at the time of the founding emperor of the Yüan dynasty and that is considered to be as authoritative for Mongol history as the *Kojiki* is for Japanese history; the Genghis Khan chronicle stops before the Mongolian adventures in West Turkistan begin.

For the following account of the Mongol siege of Samarkand and the tragedy that followed, I have drawn largely on Bartold's study, *The Mongolian Invasion of Turkistan*. He points out that the forces that descended upon Samarkand were considerably larger than those that had taken Bukhara for two reasons: first, all the men of Bukhara had been forced to enlist in the Mongol army; and second, the Mongols had conscripted villagers as the army passed through the countryside on its way from Bukhara to Samarkand. These forced enlistments were made with the siege of Samarkand in view.

On his arrival at the city, Genghis Khan stationed his army in front of Sarai Castle, on the western edge of Samarkand. (Later, Tamerlane was to occupy a castle at the same place that bore the same name, but it was not, of course, the same castle.) After he had surrounded the castle, Genghis Khan arrayed in battle formation all the captives he had taken and required every tenth man to carry a banner. To the forces within the walls this was obviously a dismaying sight, suggesting the enormous power of the besieging army. Then, as though that were not enough, the forces under the command of Chaghatai and Ogodai, having completed their attack on Otrar, joined the besieging forces, greatly swelling their ranks.

On the third day of the siege, a fierce battle erupted suddenly when shock troops composed exclusively of citizens of the town stormed through the gates and challenged the attacking army. The number of these citizen troops has been estimated at between fifty and seventy thousand; nor did they include in their number any of the regular

army of Khorezm—they were ordinary citizens of Samarkand filled with an implacable hatred for the Mongol invader.

Before the suddenness of the attack, the Mongolians made a brief retreat, then stood firm as they awaited these impudent citizens of Samarkand—who, no matter how great their hatred of the invader, were no match for the tremendous Mongol force. Within a short time, after but two skirmishes, all the citizen troops lay dead on the field.

It is all too easy to imagine what this initial and decisive defeat meant to the citizens and soldiers within the walls of Samarkand. It was clear to them, after but five days of siege, that they had no choice but to surrender, the majority agreeing that it was the only way out. A small minority, however, unable to resign themselves, resolved to fight until the end. Accordingly, after these, to the number of two thousand, had entrenched themselves in the inner fortress of the city, the commander of the army, Tugai Khan, began negotiations with the Mongolian army. Here again, it was clear that he had no choice but to accept the terms that were dictated.

The first was that all soldiers who surrendered were to be conscripted immediately into the Mongol army. These numbered thirty thousand. After they had left the sanctuary of the walls, a deputation representing the citizens appeared before the Mongol commanders and formally surrendered the city. As soon as the gates were opened, the besieging cavalry entered and began a systematic destruction of all defense facilities. Leaving only the one inner fortress, which the two thousand soldiers were defending valiantly, the Mongols razed the walls and towers so thoroughly that afterwards not a trace remained. Next, all the citizens of Samarkand were collected in one place outside the demolished walls, and the city itself was thrown open to the Mongolian army for pillage and plunder. The soldiers seized whatever seemed valuable to them; everything else was destroyed.

Then it was the turn of the two thousand troops who were still offering unexpectedly fierce resistance from within the fortress. The Mongols first crushed the lead conduits that brought water into the castle; the walls of the fortress, as they were flooded, began to crumble. Taking

this as a signal, the Mongol horde now moved in to put an end to the resistance. At the same time the commander of the army within the fortress led half of his two thousand troops out, in a fierce assault; these broke through the Mongol lines and joined the army of the shah of Khorezm. The remaining thousand took refuge in the main religious sanctuary of the city but were, of course, unable to withstand the Mongol assault and perished when the building was set afire.

The tragedy was not yet ended. Although the Mongols had undertaken to spare the lives of the soldiers who had surrendered, they now broke their solemn promise and put to death—in a huge holocaust—thirty thousand men and twenty officers. Then, out of the citizens who had surrendered, the victors chose thirty thousand skilled artisans of various kinds, including engineers, and sent them back to the Mongolian plateau to labor for the kinsmen of Genghis Khan. Another thirty thousand were conscripted into the army. Those who remained —surely only women and children and men too old to work—were permitted, on payment of a ransom of two hundred thousand dinars, to return to their demolished city. Yet even then conscription continued.

So Samarkand, like Bukhara, became a no-man's-land, a pile of rubble, a desolate ruin, and for long years men avoided it, as though it were a city of ghosts and nightmares. The few citizens of Samarkand still left alive abandoned their old city and huddled in a new one.

Thus does Bartold, in his book on Turkistan at the time of the Mongol invasion, depict the tragedy that befell Samarkand. But what interests us more here is the question why Afrashab was so utterly and completely abandoned. Even though no wild grass grew in the desolate ruins, even though no new people came to the devastated city, it would have been only natural for the people who survived to return after a time. Whether in the Occident or the Orient, new cities are built upon old. Whatever the reason for the destruction of a city, its survivors have always returned to it to resume their interrupted life. This can only be because, as a site, it was better suited to human habitation than other places.

The exception to this general rule was Afrashab. Once it had been devastated, men did not return there to rebuild the city and to live in

it again. Why should this have been so? The answer arrived at by Russian archaeologists working on the excavations was that after the Mongol army destroyed the lead water ducts, the survivors had neither the technical ability nor the physical stamina to effect the necessary repairs.

This seems a reasonable deduction, for not only was Samarkand, before the Mongol invasion, a prosperous city but also it was built according to the most modern principles of town planning. The walls surrounding the city were sturdy and were pierced by four gates; outside, an elaborate system of conduits carried water to irrigate the land and also to bring water into the city by means of ceramic pipes branching off from the large, lead water mains. Furthermore, within the city itself were a large number of pipes that carried water to every section. Now a city of this sort can no longer be called an oasis town; on the contrary, it was as modern a city as existed in the world at that time. And just as it was conceived and built with such precision, so, once it was destroyed, its only possible destiny was oblivion.

With the return of the Mongol divisions that had been sent to pacify various districts, Genghis Khan left Samarkand and sent his army in pursuit of Shah Muhammad of Khorezm. For this purpose the vast army was divided in two, and as commanders Genghis Khan named Jebe and Sübütai, the two men in whom he had greatest confidence. We lose track of the two armies for some time, but one thing is certain: following orders, Jebe and Sübütai pursued Muhammad all the way to the southern shore of the Caspian Sea; there they learned that he had fled to an island in the sea, where he had died.

It was then that the two Mongol armies, deprived by death of their raison d'être, apparently ran amok. They crossed the Caucasus, engaging and defeating, everywhere they went, armies allied with their enemies. They entered Bulgaria, where they continued to give battle. One after another they reduced fortified towns to ashes; Irak-Ajami, Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Georgia, Syria, Armenia, Kipchak, and Bulgaria were all swept by the Mongol horde as though by a fire that is fanned by the wind. Still not satisfied, the two armies now invaded Oros, where they destroyed a number of cities, turning southern Oros into a land of desolation; then they sped on to the Azov Sea region from the banks

of the Dnieper. In all truth, their passing was like the passing of a plague of demons. Only after four long years of this did the two armies return. One of the commanders, Jebe, fell ill and died on the trek back.

During this time the main force of the Mongol army, under the command of Genghis Khan himself, had brought the entire desert area of West Turkistan under his absolute control. Those cities that resisted were destroyed; the waters of the Amu Darya, like those of the Sir Darya, were stained red with blood. Of all the cities of Khorezm that were destroyed by Genghis Khan, Samarkand is thought to have been the one most quickly reconstructed. The area that is now Afrashab was abandoned, while alongside it the survivors of the old city built their new city under Mongol rule.

Ch'ang-ch'un Chen-jen, who was in the army of Genghis Khan when it entered Samarkand, has left us several poems about the city, from which we may conclude that within a few years of its destruction, a new city had arisen with power to charm the soldier-poet. Perhaps, because the land around Samarkand was suited to both fruit and grain, the people had no choice but to restore it as the central city of the Zaraf-shan river area. From the poems of Ch'ang-ch'un Chen-jen, we learn that the inhabitants of the new town were soon leading a peaceful and orderly existence, much as they had before the fall of their old city. He tells us that the women covered their faces with purple or black silk scarves decorated with embroidered flowers, that artisans produced trays and plates out of copper alloys, and that all the wine vessels the people used were made of glass. Thus it seems safe to assume that Genghis Khan, who had put such terrible energy into destroying the city, now put an equal amount into restoring it.

His invasion of Central and West Asia lasted over seven full years, from the autumn of 1219 to the beginning of 1227. The fact that during those seven years the Mongols subdued the entire area does not mean they met with no resistance. At least one man fought them, and that was Jalaluddin, the son of Shah Muhammad, who would himself have been ruler of Khorezm on his father's death but for the Mongol inva-sion. This invasion he resisted with all his might, resting neither night nor day. As soon as he had gathered enough troops about him, he

would challenge the enemy, fighting until he lost, fleeing, collecting more troops, then challenging the enemy once again. Even Genghis Khan was moved by his valor, and not even Genghis Khan had the satisfaction of seeing young Jalaluddin's head brought into his camp.

It was a strange fate that befell Jalaluddin's father, Shah Muhammad, after the fall of Samarkand, for the enemy that invaded his realm was no ordinary enemy, and where he passed, only the ashes of cities remained and the rotting corpses of their inhabitants. Then, using ruined Samarkand as a base, the two Mongol divisions undertook their pursuit of the fleeing monarch while the main force of the army was engaged in subduing and destroying all the cities within his realm of Khorezm.

On the day that Samarkand fell, Shah Muhammad had no choice but to flee, and although in his kingdom there must still have been hundreds of thousands of loyal soldiers, he found them weak and unreliable. They were incapable of organizing resistance, as city after city fell and peaceful citizens were slaughtered.

To gain some idea of how extraordinarily swift was the Mongol pursuit of the hapless monarch, we must consider that the army left the Mongolian plateau and crossed the Altai range in the spring of 1219; by autumn of that same year they had begun their invasion of Khorezm; and only twelve months later, according to likely calculations, Muhammad was fleeing toward his island refuge.

It was, as we know, of no avail: the shah was ill and powerless. As he felt the approach of death, he gathered his sons around him and appointed Jalaluddin his heir. If they all worked and fought together, he said, they could still rescue their country from the enemy. On January 10, 1221, the body of Muhammad was buried on the island where he died. It was wrapped only in the shift he wore: there was not even a shroud for the dead monarch.

Seeing his father's unhappy death, Jalaluddin resolved that as long as he lived he would fight the invader. Of medium height and build, he was so dark in complexion that he looked like a Turk. In fact, his mother had come from India. Wasting no time, Jalaluddin and his brothers left the island where their father lay buried and made for Mangyshlak. There Jalaluddin sent his two younger brothers to Ur-

gench, on the lower reaches of the Amu Darya, which had so far not been invaded by the Mongols, to proclaim that Jalaluddin had succeeded to the throne of his father. Then he himself proceeded to Urgench, which became the main base for resistance in the desert area. Although ninety thousand men gathered around the young shah, he was himself not too confident of their prowess, for they were but a mixed crew of brigands and outlaws. Indeed, when news reached them that the Mongol army was moving against Urgench, they grew frightened, and some even said they would take Jalaluddin captive and force him to surrender.

"It is not only the Mongol wolves who are approaching," said Timur-Merlik, a Khorezm general renowned for his bravery, "but there are also wolves within the city that might fall upon us any moment. We have no choice but to leave here for a time." Jalaluddin accepted Timur's counsel and, accompanied by his two brothers, the general, and some three hundred personal guards, left the city by night. For sixteen days they sped across the Kara-kum Desert, heading for Nessa, but soon realized that they were surrounded by the Mongol army—and that the wide circle was narrowing.

And so Jalaluddin fought his first battle. The three hundred men charged the encircling army and broke through the enemy ranks. In the skirmish the two younger brothers of Jalaluddin were taken prisoner; they were at once decapitated, and their heads borne in triumph on pikes; but Jalaluddin himself escaped and made for Ghazni in the Hindu Kush. Now he had not only his father to avenge but his two brothers as well, and his hatred of the Mongols grew to the point where, if they could have been called wolves intent on conquest, he himself was a wolf obsessed with revenge.

In Ghazni he attracted to his cause some sixty or seventy thousand men; the fact that he was the young shah of Khorezm was in itself an appealing factor. The Mongols, having learned of this army of resistance, began to move toward Bahmian; and Jalaluddin responded by moving also. The two forces met at Parwan.

This was Jalaluddin's second battle, in which he demonstrated not only his military genius but also his great bravery and daring. Once a

strategy had been determined upon, he was ruthless in pursuing it. This, then, was the first time the Mongol army met real opposition in their Central Asian adventure. Jalaluddin led the Mongol wolves into treacherous mountain passes, where he surrounded them and inflicted heavy damages. Defeated, the Mongols tried to flee, and in their flight still more were slain.

It was a great victory for Jalaluddin, but it was, naturally enough, not to remain so for very long. He soon received intelligence that the main force of the Mongol army was heading in his direction; if it was indeed the main force, then that meant the force under the direct command of Genghis Khan. Jalaluddin accordingly led his men away, toward India, but within two weeks of their retreat from Ghazni, the Mongol army also entered northern India. Once again they demonstrated their ability to move with almost incredible rapidity. That they were able to stop the army of Jalalludin at the banks of the Indus River demonstrates the enormous superiority of the trained forces of Genghis Khan over the untrained mob that followed Jalaluddin. It was the latter's fate never in his military career to command soldiers worthy of him; the sole exception was the valiant general, Timur-Merlik.

Skirmishes were fought here and there along the riverbank, but the Mongol forces, lined up in a semicircle along the Indus, were overwhelmingly strong, and the ring around Jalaluddin grew narrower and narrower. Timur-Merlik spoke: "Here the situation is the exact opposite of that at Parwan, where we won by forcing the Mongols up into the mountains. Here they are forcing us to fight along the riverbank, and they are winning."

"But we still have a way out," replied Jalaluddin.

"A way out?"

"There are no Mongol soldiers on the other bank of the river."

After a start of surprise at these words, Timur answered: "Then let us try."

And so the final order was given: the forces of Jalaluddin were to try to break through the enemy ranks in a last assault; if that failed, then they were to escape as best they could by swimming the Indus River.

It did fail. Large numbers of Jalaluddin's forces were slain, and the

encircling Mongol army came ever nearer. At this, Jalaluddin lowered his shield and mounted his horse; from the top of a cliff twenty feet high, he urged his steed into the river. With the shield on its back, the horse began to swim the muddy river; Jalaluddin himself held aloft the banner of his army. Timur and the troops followed him. At first Mongol sharpshooters fired arrows at the fleeing men, but shortly, on orders from Genghis Khan himself, the rain of arrows ceased. The Mongol commander was moved to take this action out of respect for the extraordinary bravery of the young shah of Khorezm.

Jalaluddin himself, having reached the other bank of the Indus, gathered around him the four thousand soldiers that were all that remained to him of his army and retreated with them deeper into India, toward Delhi, eluding Mongol pursuit. The following year, the Mongols departed from India, leaving Ghazni so devastated that it could never again become a base for operations by the army of Jalaluddin.

In 1223, the Mongol army, having subjugated all of Khorezm, began its move toward the north; in April of 1224, this great host gathered at Samarkand before beginning the long march home. The day before they left, Genghis Khan ordered the old shah's mother and her attendants, whom he had taken as hostages, to go out upon the city walls for their last farewell of Khorezm; then, with the conquering army, the women began their move toward the Mongolian plateau, never to return. It was in February of 1225 that the expeditionary force finally reached home again, ending a five-year adventure.

The Mongols left Khorezm a desolate tract of land, sad and horrible to look at. Prosperous cities had been reduced to ashes; several hundred thousand people had been killed. If Genghis Khan, as he moved toward the Mongolian plateau at the head of his army, had one regret, it may have been that he had failed to take the life of Jalaluddin, the shah of Khorezm, although he had pursued him even into India.

The young shah himself now crossed the Indus once again and began his approach toward the land he had inherited from his father, hoping to restore and rule it; and as he moved, he conquered the nations he passed through, gaining in power. But when Ogodai, the third son of Genghis Khan, succeeded his father as khan of the Mongol Empire,

Jalaluddin found himself engaged by a new Mongol army sent into Central Asia. It was in the mountainous region between Iraq and Iran, where the Kurds lived, that the engagement occurred. Surprised and outnumbered, Jalaluddin fled with but a few of his men; he met his death in a small village at the hands of a nameless Kurd. The year was 1227.

Historians tell us that Jalaluddin was brave to the point of foolhardiness, that he was serious and rather taciturn, that—at the same time—he liked good living, music, and drink, and that frequently he was found sound asleep after having imbibed too copiously. There seems to be no question that he was an extraordinarily brave youth who was unable to control his own men. Certain also is it that the people the Mongols conquered felt for him a special attraction, inasmuch as he was the only one to offer resistance to the horde of Genghis Khan, and that they had expected great things of him. After his death, many imposters appeared proclaiming themselves to be Jalaluddin.

IV

West Turkistan was not the only area in the world ruined and ruled by Mongols: the Yüan dynasty in China, the land of Chaghatai in East and West Turkistan, the country of Kipchak Khan in Russia, and that of Il Khan in Persia, all were independent nations administered by kinsmen of Genghis Khan. The empire of the Mongols thus became a world empire, the chief power being that of the Yüan dynasty in China, around which the other three great nations grouped themselves. One could now journey from the Maritime Province of Siberia in the east to the Black Sea in the west without leaving Mongol-ruled territory. Caravans and their camels could travel from China to Europe with—as it were—but a single visa.

Just as certain primitive animals grew such unmanageably large bodies that the brain lost control of and communication with the other organs, so the kinsmen of Genghis Khan, in attempting to control too

vast an empire, were destined to gradually increasing dissension and final dissolution. The giant reptiles attained so great a height they had no chance of surviving—and the same was true of the Mongol empire.

The first to fall was the Yüan dynasty, in the middle of the fourteenth century. The people of Han recovered their own sovereignty after nearly two and one-half centuries of Mongol rule, and the Yüan dynasty was replaced by that of Ming, which was to endure for seventeen reigns. With the fall of the Yüan dynasty, the other three nations, the khan nations, also began to experience a waning of their power and of their distinctive Mongolian character. They were ripe to be assimilated and absorbed by other peoples: Tamerlane merely accelerated the process.

Another protagonist has now entered upon the Central Asian scene. Tamerlane, son of Taragai, leader of the Barlas tribe, was born at Hojairigal (near present-day Shahr-i-Sabz) on the Kashka Darya, not far from Samarkand, around the middle of the fourteenth century. At that time, the land of Chaghatai, of which Hojairigal was a part, was being wracked by civil war, with east divided against west; and on the Kashka Darya, too, minor princelings rose in opposition to the central power and fought for dominion.

Courageous by nature, Tamerlane had early distinguished himself by an ability to command others. History tells us that when still very young he surrounded himself with a strong cavalry brigade—by which we may assume that he led a small band of men in attacks on passing caravans and in encounters with neighboring tribes.

Then came young Tamerlane's opportunity. In 1360 and 1361, Tughlak Timur, of the eastern region of the Chaghatai country, invaded Mawara-al-Nahr, and young Tamerlane enlisted in his army and distinguished himself in the ensuing actions. As a result, when Tughlak departed, he left Tamerlane behind as minister of Kesh. Tamerlane was then twenty-five years old, and such was the beginning of his amazing career.

Now he began to seek out powerful confederates, to win their confidence, to make alliances with them—and in no time at all he broke the alliance and destroyed the confederate. In this manner, whether he was born to greatness or whether he achieved it through force of

character, he became sovereign of the Chaghatai country, then conquered the Persia of Ili Khan and the Russia of Kipchak Khan. His army then invaded northern India, after which he fought, and defeated, the Osman Turkish monarch, the sphere of whose influence extended from Asia Minor to the Balkans. During this latter engagement, he was badly wounded in both his right arm and his right leg; the consequence was permanent lameness—and a nickname: Timur-i-leng, Lame Timur, or (as he is more familiarly known in English) Tamerlane.

Revering Genghis Khan, he determined to reassemble the huge Mongol empire and to make the established religion that of Mohammed. He even went so far as to call himself a descendent of Genghis Khan, but there appears to be no basis whatsoever for his assertion. Being largely Turkish in descent, he could have had but little of the blood of the Mongols in his veins. The fact that his wife was a granddaughter of the sovereign of the western Chaghatai may give a certain substance to his Mongol claims as well as a certain justification to his military adventures. While no one can say at precisely what point in his life he resolved, as a kinsman of Genghis Khan, to restore the Mongol empire, the fact remains that he devoted all his energies as a warrior to the realization of this goal.

Like the Sogdians of the past, Tamerlane selected Samarkand as his capital and ordered it to be sumptuously decorated; much of what remains at the present time in the city dates back to the Timurid dynasty. Once having returned to Samarkand, he immediately set about his manifest destiny: the invasion of China. The Ming dynasty, which had replaced the Yüan, was an enemy he could not leave victorious, nor could he restore the Mongol empire to its former glory without overthrowing the Ming emperors. It was in 1368, when Tamerlane was thirty-two (two years before he became a reigning monarch), that the Yüan dynasty of China was replaced by the Ming. For thirty-seven years, while Tamerlane led his conquering armies east and west, he bided his time. He established friendly relations with the Ming rulers. The *Ming Chronicles* (the *Ming-shu*), in the section on the Western Territories, has quite a bit to say about these relations. In 1387, according to the chronicles, Tamerlane's first emissaries came to China, bringing with them

as gifts fifteen horses and two camels. Then, in 1392, a second group of emissaries brought out of China some twelve hundred Moslems who had emigrated to the province of Han-su. In 1394 ambassadors came again from Tamerlane, this time bringing two hundred horses, along with a letter from Tamerlane, which is given in the *Ming-shu* in a Chinese translation:

> Beyond the Great Wall, the August Emperor of the Ming Dynasty rules the whole world with his divine command, and the results of his virtues may be seen everywhere. . . . His sacred virtues are numerous, and nothing like them has ever been heard of. . . .

It is hard to believe that Tamerlane could have assumed so subject an attitude, but the fact remains that he did send a lavish gift of horses to China and that China in return sent emissaries to him in 1395. (They returned home only after his death.) The ambassador had his audience with Tamerlane in 1397, the year he returned from an expedition to the West. As it happens, the ambassador from the Spanish court, González de Clavijo, had just arrived, and according to the records of his embassy, he was given a seat above that of the Chinese ambassador. These records of Clavijo are extremely valuable sources for information about Tamerlane and contemporary Central Asia in general.

Bartold (1869–1930), in his book *Ulugh Beg and his Times*, has the following to say:

> So far as we know, from the records emanating from Tamerlane's side, he met the messenger in 1397 at a camp on the banks of the Sir Darya. To Tamerlane's delight the messenger brought many gifts, and Tamerlane let him go. This would suggest that the messenger was allowed to return home, but Chinese documents tell us that he was detained. In the records of Tamerlane, the Chinese emperor is ridiculed as "the pig king." . . . The reason for delaying the return of the messenger could not, of course, have been a friendly one.

For information as to when Tamerlane may have first decided on

the Chinese expedition, and why he did so, we have only the two sources, the chapter on the Western Territories in the *Ming-shu* and the travel diary of González de Clavijo; the two are not necessarily in agreement.

Although Tamerlane, as I have noted, sent a number of gifts to China, China's reciprocation appears to have been meager. This, too, must have rankled. So by the time the first Chinese ambassador arrived, Tamerlane may already have entertained a hearty dislike for the country. Further, with the replacement of the Yüan by the Ming dynasty, the position of the Moslems in China became more than perilous. In 1399, in fact, one hundred thousand of them were massacred. We do not even know whether Tamerlane intended to restore the Yüan dynasty, but we do know that in the year 1404 he began to move against China.

Most of his life had been spent in military adventures in the west, with the exception of his invasion of the eastern region of the Mongolian plateau. Now he was about to move a huge army to the east in a major military operation. It goes without saying that he appointed himself commander in chief of the expeditionary force. Previous to this, from 1397 to late in 1398, Tamerlane had instructed his heir, Muhammad Sultan, to build fortresses along the bank of the Ashpal River (which divides present-day Sir Darya country from Semiretche country) and had given him forty thousand men for the purpose. Later, a fortress was constructed on the east bank of Issik Kol. Both these measures were preparatory to the Chinese expedition.

Bartold's account of this last adventure of Tamerlane's runs as follows:

> Tamerlane, with an army two hundred thousand strong under his command, spent December of 1404 at Akstrat. On December 25, he made for Otrar, arriving on January 14. No record is given of the concentration of forces at Farghana or of the number of troops stationed at Ashapal or Issik Kol.
>
> The winter of 1404/5, which they spent in Turkistan, was as cold a winter as had ever been experienced. Both the Amu Darya and the Sir Darya were frozen from December to February. Tamer-

lane, old as he was, did not expect the expedition to come to a speedy conclusion. In Otrar he received in audience a messenger from Toftamish Khan, who had fled Ching Chan Khan, and assured him that as soon as the war with China ended, he would attack Ching Chan Khan and make Toftamish the khan of the country. The direct cause of Tamerlane's death is thought to be the excessive amount of wine he drank to keep himself warm. Death came to him on February 18, 1405.

He died leading his army on the distant expedition that he had planned, and in this he was like Genghis Khan, whom he so much admired. Also as with Genghis Khan, the hearth of Tamerlane was brought back in secrecy to his capital. One difference between the two men was that the empire of Genghis Khan prospered after his death, while Tamerlane was unfortunate in his successors.

His empire lasted less than a century: Tamerlane died in 1405, and in 1500 the Timurid empire fell, torn by internal conflict and division. It was a century characterized by dissension and decay. The one exception was Ulugh Beg, Tamerlane's grandson, whose name, as educator and scholar, has been immortalized and who, for his work in astronomy, is numbered among the great classic scientists. But his life, which was not altogether happy, ended at the hands of an assassin sent by his own son, and the quiet yet firm beat of the hammer building his observatory was all but lost in the din of a falling empire.

Most of the old buildings still to be seen today in Samarkand date from either the time of Tamerlane himself or that of his grandson, Ulugh Beg. Tamerlane, as I have already noted, devoted himself enthusiastically to the reconstruction of Samarkand and to making it the capital of the world. Of all the Timurid constructions, Bibi-Khanym seems to symbolize most vividly the fate of the empire. It is the largest of the ancient buildings of Samarkand and, in its present, partly ruined state, the most memorable.

Tamerlane conceived the idea of building it in 1399, after he had seen, during a military expedition, the remains of a great complex of sacred buildings in India; on his return to Samarkand, he determined

to construct something that would approach if not excel the Indian remains. He went so far as to superintend the construction himself during his lifetime; the building was not, in fact, completed until three years after his death.

The largest building in Central Asia, it was over three hundred feet wide and over seven hundred feet long and was built with such phenomenal haste that it seemed doomed to early destruction. In fact, immediately upon its completion, a pile of bricks tumbled down upon a worshiper, and in the six hundred years that have followed the building has sunk to the point of no repair, with crumbling walls and vanished brickwork. The reason for the hasty construction appears to have been the seventy-year-old Tamerlane's determination to honor his young queen, after whom he named the building. Upon one of the gables there was said to have been incised the words, "Tamerlane is the shadow of a god cast upon the earth."

By comparison, the buildings constructed during Tamerlane's earlier years do not present so sad a spectacle. There are, in addition, a number of tombs erected to house the remains of important personages of the Timurid era. Known as the Shah-Zindeh group, it comprises a whole ensemble of graves of those intimately associated in one way or another with the empire, such as Tamerlane's sisters and wives, his generals of the army, the son of Ulugh Beg, and his astronomy teacher, as well as several unidentified people, both men and women.

Of all, perhaps the most beautiful is the mausoleum of Shady Mulik, a young niece of Tamerlane's whom he loved in his youth. She died at the age of twenty-four, Tamerlane being then thirty-five. The floor of the mausoleum is brick, and colored bricks in geometrical designs decorate the walls and the ceiling. The impression that the building gives is that of a miniature, sky-colored castle. Thus, the tomb that Tamerlane built in his younger days for the girl he loved is both more beautiful and in far better preservation than the vast temple he built, when an old man, for his young queen.

Ulugh Beg was born on March 22, 1394. His father was Tamerlane's eldest son, Shah Lukh, and his mother was Gauhar Shad Aga, daughter of an aristocratic family of the Chaghatai. At the time of the birth of

Ulugh Beg, Tamerlane was on a military expedition to western Asia, including Iran. On April 16, he entered Mardin, a Mesopotamian city, and on the following day, in his military camp, received word from his first queen, Salai Mulik Khanym, of the birth of his grandson. Tamerlane, then fifty-eight, was so delighted by the news that he exempted the inhabitants of the conquered city from the necessity of offering him gifts.

The child was named Muhammad Taragi but was known by the nickname, so to speak, of Ulugh Beg, which means simply "prince." Between the ages of five and nine, Ulugh Beg lived in the establishment of Tamerlane, where he was recognized as an exceptionally bright child. In 1404, when Tamerlane received the Chinese envoy on the outskirts of Samarkand, Ulugh Beg accepted the imperial message and, accompanying the envoy, carried the message to the throne of his grandfather. Thus, for young Ulugh Beg as well as for old Tamerlane, it was a day of rare excitement. That same year Ulugh Beg, at the command of his sixty-eight-year-old grandfather, was married to his cousin, Eggi Begm. It was as though a kind of chaotic frenzy possessed the old man and forced him to do for his beloved grandson things that others considered extraordinary.

When, after Tamerlane died, armed conflict broke out among his heirs, Ulugh Beg sided with his father and helped him to capture Samarkand. As a reward, he was given the city to govern, though he was then only around fifteen or sixteen. From that moment on, during the period marked by his youth and early manhood, Samarkand flourished as one of the great civilized centers of the contemporary world; to it came scholars and poets and artists; and the golden age of Turkistan was born. Ulugh Beg offered protection and patronage to the men of art and learning who migrated to Samarkand, he ordered the construction of a number of buildings, and he himself, an astronomer and mathematician, left behind works of high quality.

Samarkand's observatory and its famous Rigistan with its three madrasahs are all Ulugh Beg constructions. The observatory, which was discovered in a corner of Afrashab, where ancient Samarkand lies buried, was built in 1428. After many centuries had passed, its very location was forgotten; then the Russian archaeologist, Biatokin, determined its site

on the basis of some seventeenth-century documents, and excavations were begun. What was finally brought to light, unfortunately, was only the remains of a sextant; the building itself was completely gone—yet records tell us that it was an imposing three-story structure beautifully decorated with enameled tiles.

More fortunately for us, the three madrasahs (Moslem colleges) that circle the vast square (Registan) are in almost perfect condition. The one on the left, the oldest of the three, was built by Ulugh Beg in 1417, when he was in his mid-twenties. Here he lectured on philosophy and astronomy to more than a hundred students, young men who listened eagerly to a most extraordinary prince.

With the death of his father, Shah Lukh, family conflicts broke out once again. Ulugh Beg allied himself with his eldest son, Abdul Lyatif; the alliance proved successful, and the land resumed its peaceful existence. But an unhappy destiny lay in wait for Ulugh Beg.

He and his son began quarreling, and the quarrels eventually erupted into violence. The records give us no reason for this, and it is hard to imagine how, or why, so intelligent a man as Ulugh Beg should have allowed the crisis to occur. In any case, by 1448 the son had definitively broken with the father, and in September, 1449, the two fought a battle on the outskirts of Samarkand, in which the forces of Ulugh Beg were utterly routed. When he fled for sanctuary to the city, the governor, whom he had himself appointed, refused to permit the gates to be opened to him. And the same thing happened at Sharhir, on the northern side, where Ulugh Beg was taken prisoner and sent to his victorious son.

As punishment, all his property was confiscated and he was ordered by his son to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. No doubt the unhappy father hoped that by following his son's command he might save his life, but that hope was doomed to disappointment. Accompanied by a single servant, Ulugh Beg left Samarkand for Mecca. The time was evening. Ulugh Beg had not gone far before a mounted soldier overtook him, to tell him that preparations for his pilgrimage had not been completed and that he was to wait for the time being in a nearby building. Ulugh Beg entered the building that had been indicated to him. Was

he aware, as he did so, that death awaited him there? Within moments, assassins seized him, bound him with ropes, and took him into the garden, where they beheaded him.

Today he lies beside his grandfather in his beloved city of Samarkand in one of its most important remains, the Gur Amir, the tomb of the Timurids. It stands outside the city walls, on a lower level, and is gargantuan in size. Entirely surrounded by stone walls, the mausoleum is rather dark. The floor, paved with stones, is over thirty-five feet long and almost twenty-five feet wide; the columns are covered with blue tiles. There, on the ground floor, stretches an orderly row of tombstones shaped like coffins: they are the tombstones of Tamerlane, Ulugh Beg, Tamerlane's grandsons, and Tamerlane's tutor. The bones lie buried beneath, in a smaller room underground, where lie also the gravestones of other members of Tamerlane's family. To me this was the most eloquent building in all of Samarkand, and I thought, as I stood there looking at the tombs, that Tamerlane and Ulugh Beg are together today as they were all those centuries ago when the young prince conducted the Chinese envoy to the throne of his grandfather.

In June, 1941, the mausoleum was first opened to the public, and it then became evident to all the world that one of Tamerlane's legs was shorter than the other and that the neck of Ulugh Beg had been hacked with a sword. The day of his death, according to the tombstone, was October 27.

His son, Abdul Lyatif, who had contrived the assassination of Ulugh Beg, did not prosper either. After the death of his father, he ruled the land despotically for a time until he, too, on May 4, 1450, lost his life as a result of intrigue. The dynasty persisted for another half-century; then like the house of worship that Tamerlane named after his young wife, Bibi-Khanym, the Timurid empire crumbled and fell silently.

Poets of the Western Territories

I

In 1211, for the first time, Genghis Khan crossed the Great Wall and entered the Chin state. After falling back to the north, the Mongol wolves swarmed over the Great Wall once again in 1213. This time their invasion of the Chin state was on a much broader scale, and they even made several sorties into Chung-tu, the capital (present-day Peking). The peace treaty that their representatives made was a treaty in name only; in fact, it was unilateral and differed in no way whatsoever from a demand for outright surrender. However, after Genghis Khan had led his victorious troops back to the Mongolian plateau, the people of Chin moved their capital from Chung-tu to Pien-ching (present-day K'ai-feng). When Genghis Khan heard of the move, he came to the conclusion that the Chin rulers had no intention of abiding by the terms of the "peace treaty," and so he accordingly commanded two divisions to cross the Great Wall yet again and subject the Chin state to absolute conquest. He himself encamped beside Lake Yuri.

Now to the camp of the commander, as the year 1214 ended and throughout the following year, came a constant stream of messengers bringing the joyful news of victory after victory. At last came word that Chung-tu itself was nothing but a mound of smoldering ashes, and hard upon this news there began arriving at the camp of Genghis Khan an unbelievable array of the most precious treasures—and not only inanimate objects but a vast horde of people as well: warriors, farmers, bureaucrats, scholars, astrologers, spiritualists, everyone in fact who appeared to have any special talent or skill.

Among this throng there appeared one day a strange-looking man from Cathay by the name of Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai. He was said to have served in the royal castle at Chung-tu as a minor official and was already a well-known scholar, having mastered the teachings of both Confucius and Buddha. Genghis Khan, until this time, had conquered only the Mongolian plateau (his invasion of Central Asia, with its great centers of civilization, like Samarkand and Bukhara, was still in the future); thus, his conquest of China was his first experience of true civilization, and perhaps Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai was the first true scholar he had ever encountered.

An enormous man, sporting a long black beard, he was brought into the presence of Genghis Khan. When asked his age, he answered—without a trace of fear or nervousness in his voice—that he was twenty-six.

"You, I hear," said Genghis Khan, "are a man of Cathay, a nation that was conquered by the Chin, whom I have in turn conquered. Thus have I avenged you."

"My grandfather," said the young man arrogantly, "served the imperial household, as did my father, and I, too, have lived on their benevolence. How then may I rejoice in their downfall?"

These words pleased Genghis Khan; and after he considered, moreover, that Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai had the reputation for being well versed in astronomy, geography, history, medicine, divining, fortune-telling, and other things besides, he decided to take the man into his service. Since Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai's name was difficult to pronounce, Genghis Khan gave him a Mongol name—Uto Sakar, which meant "Long Beard."

This meeting between the two men turned out to be a major event in the lives of both. Genghis Khan, as a result of it, found a trusted counselor, a man whose character and abilities he came to value highly, whom he consulted frequently on many different matters, and who, after a time, became his sole political adviser. It was Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai who made the conqueror realize how valuable was the high civilization of China and how essential also, if a conquered country was to remain at peace, was the policy of benevolent rule.

If Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, for his part, became an important civil servant

as a result of his entry into the entourage of Genghis Khan, he also, as a result of it, has left his name in history. His writings include a collection of essays and poems as well as a report on the Western Territories that he wrote after accompanying the military expedition that Genghis Khan sent into the region. But this expedition did not take place until 1219, and meanwhile Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai lived in the camp of the conqueror—an experience that must have been extremely painful to him.

One day he said to Genghis Khan: "There is an animal called the Chio Tuan, which has green fur and but one horn and which understands the languages of men. This animal is sent, at times of grave social disorder on earth, to teach men a lesson; he is sent at the command of a god who loves life and despises killing; and this animal, lord, has been seen. Therefore, as soon as you have succeeded in pacifying West Turkistan, you should lead your army back to the Mongolian plateau." Was it these words that moved Genghis Khan to do precisely what Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai advised?

Of the crossing of Tien-shan by the Mongol army, Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, after their return to the Mongolian plateau, wrote:

> Mountains and rivers follow, one upon the other, lush with green. Our vehicles are as numerous as running clouds, our soldiers like drops of rain in a downpour, the fields are thick with our horses and our oxen; the firing of our weapons burns heaven itself, and the smoke and the fire are seen together. The tents of the men are lined up for ten thousand *li*, and the men themselves are more spirited than they have ever been before.
>
> When we crossed Chin-shan, the time was midsummer, but the peaks of the mountains were covered with snow and the glaciers stood a thousand feet high.

Later, of Samarkand, the scholar writes:

> There is a great fortified city a thousand *li* west of Otrar that is called Samarkand; it takes its name from the fact that the land on which it is built is rich and fertile. Men of the west call the place Ho-chung-fu because it stands amid the river. The city is prosperous,

and the coins that are in circulation are of gold and copper, without holes or milled edges.

The city walls are many miles long, and within them lie gardens and orchards. Every house, in fact, has its own garden, decorated according to the taste of the owner; almost always there are to be found running streams, fountains, square pools, round ponds, with willows and oak trees side by side. Orchards of damson and peach stretch for miles.

In his Central Asian journal, Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai gives his impressions not only of Samarkand but also of Bukhara, Urgench, Barkh, the Indus, and Kipchak. Although the descriptions are short, they form an impressive, an invaluable picture of contemporary Central Asia; further, poems written during his stay there are to be found in his collected works. In Volume VI there is a series of some ten poems devoted to Samarkand, in which Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai describes, among other things, the sufferings of the people. They must dig caves, he says, to escape marauding soldiers, and they must build elevated structures to avoid the waters that come at floodtime. Half the year it does not rain at all; then, during three months of winter, it snows heavily.

One of his poems goes:

Quiet and lonely is Samarkand. A cottage stands beside the river. I open the cask and drink a glass of delicious wine. I cast a net and bring in the fish of the season. If there are guests, we write poems together; if I am alone, I read a book. Though far from my own country, I have found such happiness—but what may I do about growing old?

And another:

Quiet and lonely is Samarkand. Row upon row stand houses with tiled roofs. Grapes become wine, loquat trees blossom. With relish we eat the tongues of chickens, and we feast on melons as big as horses' heads. Life is but eating and drinking; I would not hesitate to cross the desert to lead such a life.

Early in 1222, Genghis Khan pitched his tent at a camp in the north-

ern foothills of the Hindu Kush, and in April, there in the camp, he received in audience a strange man named Ch'ang-ch'un Chen-jen, who was said to be the world's greatest authority on Taoism. It had taken him a year to reach the camp from his far-away province of Shantung, and he had come in response to a command from Genghis Khan that had been written by Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai. In his keen desire to meet the Taoist sage, Genghis Khan had been motivated mainly by his obsession about longevity: being Genghis Khan, he could have almost anything in the world he wanted, but he could not prevent himself from growing old.

Accordingly, as soon as Chen-jen arrived in the camp, Genghis Khan had the ill-kempt old man conducted to the imperial tent. "I understand," he said, with the utmost courtesy, "that you do not as a general rule accept invitations from foreign countries. But now you have traveled many thousands of miles from your own country, and I am most grateful to you for being here."

"I came upon receiving your command," replied Chen-jen, "since that was the will of heaven."

"Yes," said Genghis Khan, "you have come from afar. Now, what medicine have you that will guarantee a long life?"

"I know ways of keeping the body healthy, but I know no medicine that will ensure a long life."

"Is there really no such medicine?"

"I know ways of keeping the body healthy, but I know no medicine that will ensure a long life."

Never before had Genghis Khan received so brusque a man in audience; yet, because he was determined to obtain a longevity drug, he ignored the old man's gruffness and sought to soften his heart as best he could. "I understand," he said, "that people call you a man of heaven."

"What people call me," replied the old man, "is of no interest to me."

So that day Genghis Khan had to abandon hope of getting the medicine he wanted, but he did not abandon hope entirely. He invited the old man to remain at the camp and treated him well—and in return, instead of the recipe for longevity that he desired, Genghis Khan was

given some poems that the old man had written at Lun T'ai, at Samarkand, and in the desert through which he had passed; and Genghis Khan was also given a lecture on Taoism. Now, for a time, the conqueror had two foreign counselors, but one of these was aged and must soon be on his way again.

On October 15, at Samarkand, old Chen-jen lectured on Tao in the presence of Genghis Khan. There is, of course, no way for us to know what the old man had to say or what it meant to the conquering lord, but one thing is certain: the day was an important one in the life of Genghis Khan, as it was, indeed, in the life of Ch'ang-ch'un Chen-jen, who, as soon as he had given the lecture, left for home.

Li Chih-ch'ang, who had accompanied the old man on the Central Asian journey, wrote a cycle of descriptive poems after their return, and the poems have come down to us. One of them goes as follows:

> Five thousand *li* west of Mount Yin,
> Twenty *li* east of Ta-shi,
> The rain stops and we see a forbidding, snow-covered mountain.
> The gardens are silent, no birds sing,
> The wind blows gently, the flowers are glorious.
> While awaiting the arrival of a friend,
> I look about, I sing, I walk back and forth.

Strangely enough, it appears that Ch'ang-ch'un Chen-jen and Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai, those two men of learning in an alien land who should have had so much in common, did not in fact get along. In his notes to a translation of the poems of Li Chih-ch'ang, the Japanese scholar, Shinobu Iwamura, touches on this point:

> There can be no doubt whatsoever that Ch'ang-ch'un and Ch'u-ts'ai met in Central Asia. We do not need the suggestion of Wang Kuo-wei, we know clearly from Ch'u-ts'ai's records that the two men composed poems together. . . . In his collected works there are a number of poems about the western lands that he wrote in response to poems by Ch'ang-ch'un, and vice versa. . . . However, just as Ch'u-ts'ai later erased the name of Ch'ang-ch'un

from the Central Asian poems, so Li Chih-ch'ang fails to make a single mention of Ch'u-ts'ai in *his* poems on the region—despite the fact that Ch'u-ts'ai was so intimately associated with it.

After the death of Genghis Khan, Ch'u-ts'ai, following the commander's own preference, recommended that he be succeeded by his younger son, Ogodai. The official decision was to be made at a congress attended by the chiefs of all the tribes, but meanwhile Ch'u-ts'ai saw to it that Ogodai acted as ruler *pro tempore* and that Chaghatai, the older brother, demonstrated his submission. The succession was officially confirmed at the conference that soon followed. Ogodai appointed Ch'u-ts'ai to the position of director of documentation, the highest post ever to be held by a civilian, and while the ten-year reign of Ogodai lasted, Ch'u-ts'ai ruled the northern part of China. Even after the death of Ogodai, when for a time his queen took command of the empire, Ch'u-ts'ai continued to enjoy royal patronage and to hold important positions. He was fifty-five years old when he died.

II

THE NAME of Nevayi will be familiar to anyone that has ever been to Uzbekistan. Foreign travelers who visit the capital, Tashkent, customarily stop at the Hotel Tashkent, and just across the street stands a huge building called The Opera and Ballet Theatre in Honor of Nevayi. Thus, virtually the moment he sets foot in Central Asia, the contemporary traveler encounters a contemporary building named for Nevayi. Then, if he makes Tashkent his base and visits other cities of the republic, he will encounter—wherever he goes—buildings and streets called Nevayi. For Mir Ali Shir Nevayi, the Central Asian poet who flourished in the latter part of the fifteenth century, is revered throughout the republic as the father of Uzbek poetry.

The last years of the fifteenth century, when Nevayi was at his most productive, were the years that saw the decline and fall of the Timurid

empire. Tamerlane himself, as we have noted, died in 1405; his son Shah Lukh, who was ruler of Khorasan, died in 1447; and two years later he was followed by that remarkable man, Ulugh Beg, scientist, astronomer, and lord of Samarkand. With his death, internecine struggles within the empire intensified, and the whole region from western Turkistan to eastern Iran was plunged into violent partisanship. This was for a time resolved when the Timurid Hussain Baikara became sultan of Khorasan in 1468, with Herat as his capital.

Making his own glorious contribution to this last flowering of the Timurid empire was Ali Shir, who was appointed prime minister by Hussain Baikara at Herat. Poet and scholar, Ali Shir sought to govern the country according to the most enlightened ideas. His appointment was so remarkably apt that it almost seemed as though heaven itself was conspiring to display to the world the glories of a Timurid renaissance.

One reason Nevayi is so greatly esteemed throughout Central Asia is that, proficient in both Persian and in his native tongue, he preferred to write his poetry in the latter, an Eastern Turkic language to which the Mongols gave the name of Chaghatai. Prior to Nevayi, virtually all the literature produced in the region was written in Persian, but by people who lived far from the mainstream of Persian tradition. Nevayi hoped to instill into Central Asian literature the vigor of his own living language, and to this aim he dedicated his genius. "The richness of Uzbek," he said, "is a proven fact, and an Uzbek poet should no longer depend on Persian to express his thoughts. Even though he may be able to create in both languages, he ought to prefer to write his poems in his mother tongue."

His real name was Nizamaddin Ali Shir; Nevayi—which means "melodious" in Uzbek—was his pen name. He was born at Herat in 1441, scion of an aristocratic Turkish family, and grew up in a literary atmosphere where great respect was paid to poetry and the other arts. He himself began to write poems while still a boy.

His great opportunity came when his friend, Hussain Baikara, became lord of Herat and summoned him back from Samarkand, where he was then living, to Herat, to take part in the new government. In

1472, then, he became a minister, and it was in large part thanks to his efforts that Herat now began to supplant Samarkand as the chief cultural center of Central Asia. Proud of a long artistic tradition, Herat was wholly destroyed by the Mongols in 1222 and once again in 1383 by Tamerlane's horsemen. Again restored, it began, under the sultanate of Hussain Baikara, to experience a glowing renaissance. Attracted by Nevayi's patronage and his promise of protection, scholars and artists flocked to the city, as well as skilled craftsmen of all sorts—stonemasons, potters, weavers, gem carvers, and so on. At the time when Nevayi was minister, Herat boasted more than ten madrasahs. Further, since two caravan routes—that between Persia and China and that between India and China—crossed at Herat, the thriving bazaars of the city were always filled with prosperous merchants from far-off lands.

This is not to say that Nevayi's path, as a statesman, lay always in the sun. In 1487 he was expelled from the capital and ordered to take up the governorship of a border town. Homesick for his own lovely city of Herat, he felt himself a failure as a statesman but took recompense in the frequent visits of his muse and in the fact that his reputation as a poet was steadily growing. In 1489 he was permitted to return to the capital, but no longer took part in the government.

The year 1499 saw the composition of "Words of a Bird," considered to be his most representative work, and also of a collection of essays, *Debates on Two Languages*.

The following year he made a journey out of Herat to welcome Hussain Baikara back from a military expedition to a distant land, where he had vanquished the armies of his own son. A poet, Nevayi could hardly have failed to be aware of the dark, sinister shadow that was overtaking his country. On January 3, 1501, he died suddenly, a guest at a banquet given to welcome Hussain Baikara back to Herat. To his funeral, which was lavishly celebrated, came a vast number of his fellow citizens.

Nevayi perhaps knew when to die. Not many years later the last feeble flame of the empire of Tamerlane flickered and vanished. Before his death, Nevayi wrote:

O wine, why are we not friends?
I feel the pangs of sorrow and my sight darkens
As I look about me at this dreary world.

They are the verses of a man who has been deeply touched and saddened by the disorders that attend a crumbling empire.

At the library of Tashkent I had the rare opportunity of examining an original manuscript of Nevayi's poems. The book was so large I had to use both arms to hold it, and every page was filled with beautifully colored designs in which the poems were inscribed. It was a most luxurious and extravagant book. The complete works of Nevayi have been translated into Russian and were published in ten volumes in 1968.

If another Central Asian poet is to be mentioned in the same chapter with Nevayi, it could only be Rudaki, who lived and worked at Bukhara when it was under Samanid rule; for just as Nevayi made use of his native Chaghatai, Rudaki wrote his poems in the native tongue of the Tajiks.

Following Mirzoev's study of Rudaki,* we see that he was born in the village of Pyanji Rudark, some thirty-five miles east of Pyanjikent on the banks of the Zarafshan, and that he died in his native village in or around the year 940. It was at the beginning of the eighth century that the inhabitants of Pyanjikent, unable to bear any longer the oppressive rule of the Arabs, attempted their tragic exodus: Rudaki, then, was born in the region less than 150 years after the event and before its people had quite forgotten the nightmare.

As a boy, Rudaki learned to play a stringed instrument; and as a man, he was known both as a musician and as a poet. His fame having reached the ears of the lord of Bukhara, Nasser Ibn Ahmed, Rudaki was summoned to the palace to become musician and poet royal. This event must have occurred somewhere between his thirty-fifth and his fortieth year. The story is that he used to sing his poetry to his own music, accompanying himself on the stringed instrument that he had mastered. He might, thus, have been the sightless troubadour of legend, for some

*A. M. Mirzoev, *Rudaki: His Life and Work,* Tajik Science Academy, 1968.

say he was born blind, others that he lost his sight only toward the end of his life.

Of the fragments of his work that have come down to us, one of the most famous is a song he sang in the presence of Nasser Ibn Ahmed when the lord of Bukhara chose—against his subjects' wishes—to live away from the city:

The scent of the Murian lingers.
I recall a gentle friend.
The sands of the Amu Darya are soft
To the feet, like silk.
The Amu Darya is wide—
But so shallow it does not reach the horses's breast.
Rejoice, O Bukhara, live joyfully!
Your lord approaches like a guest.
If the lord is the moon, Bukhara is the sky—
And the moon rises in the sky.
If the lord is a cypress, Bukhara is a garden—
And the cypress returns to its garden.

Upon hearing the poem, Nasser Ibn Ahmed (so the story goes) ordered the horses to be saddled so that he might go back at once to Bukhara.

In his later years Rudaki is said to have lost the favor of the king and to have died sadly in poverty and loneliness. One of his surviving poems is thought to have been written at the time of his dismissal from the palace:

Long have I lived in this building:
Sometimes I got drunk there,
Sometimes I felt happy—
I was better placed than the king himself.
Oh, tell me why joy has changed to sorrow—
When I have not changed,
Nor the buildings, nor the streets.

Again, in much the same vein, he writes:

Now the times have changed,

And so have I.
Bring me my walking stick—
The time has come for a walking stick
And a haversack.

Rudaki's tomb was recently discovered at Pyanji Rudak. M. Gerasimov, the archaeologist who studied the bones of the poet, has come to the conclusion that Rudaki lived to be over eighty, that he lost his eyesight in his later years, and that his death was not natural but the result of a blow.

Just as there are many public buildings and streets in Uzbekistan named after Nevayi, so in Tajikistan one often hears the name of Rudaki. In the capital, Dushembe (Stalinabad), the university is named for Rudaki, and there stands a monumental statue in his honor. It was there (in my ignorance) that I first heard the name of this national hero. The youth of Tajikistan take great pride in the poetry of Rudaki, and they naturally assumed that I was familiar with it. Much to my discomfiture, I had to admit to them that I was not—a situation that I have since remedied.

Thirty-five years ago, the capital of the republic where the name of Rudaki is so highly esteemed was but a small village of less than one hundred fifty houses; today, with a population of three hundred fifty thousand, it is one of the most modern cities in West Turkistan—and perhaps the best planned of all the cities in the region.

It nestles cosily in the bosom of the Pamirs, the great mountain range that covers ninety-three percent of the terrain of Tajikistan. Between the capital and the Pyanjikent region, where Rudaki was born and spent his long life, two chains of serrated crests stand like a giant folding screen. Between the two chains lie perpetual glaciers. It is easier to understand the poetry of Rudaki if one keeps in mind the natural setting against which it was written—for he is the great poet whom the great Pamirs have produced. And perhaps it is also noteworthy to consider that in this century, when a grand city is founded on a plateau in the Pamirs, it is a blind troubadour of the ninth and tenth centuries who is the national hero of his country.

Cities of the Caravan Routes

I

THREE long nightmares racked the dreams of the peoples who lived in West Turkistan. First came the pre-Christian invasion of the army of Alexander the Great, then the Arab invasion in the eighth century, and in the thirteenth that of the Mongols. These were followed by a Timurid expedition, but at last, with the fall of Tamerlane's empire, the oasis cities settled down to a fairly quiet life after their long and turbulent history. This does not mean that wars ceased to be fought or that the peoples of the desert were now vouchsafed an unbroken peace, but it was an era when the region was composed of a number of small independent kingdoms, like Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand. This is the Central Asia that is familiar to us, this Central Asia that endured from the close of the Middle Ages to the beginning of our own era.

By the time this period began, the people we call Sogdians had already vanished without a trace, taking with them their language and their literature and the high civilization that they had built in the land between the Amu Darya and the Sir Darya. Blood of Mongols, Arabs, Turks, Persians, and countless other ethnic groups had mingled and diversified; the looks of the people as well as the languages they spoke had become distinctive. The chief ethnic groups produced by this mingling of blood were the Uzbek, the Tajik, the Kirghiz, and the Turkoman, each of course speaking his own language. To attempt to list all the ethnic groups in the region would be virtually impossible; as we noted earlier, there are eighty such in Kirghizia alone.

That long history of alarms and excursions, of invasions and mas-

sacres, of a closely knit destiny has produced an extremely complex region where a vast number of different ethnic groups live and work, speaking their own language and following their own customs. Contributing to this diversity is the fact that, as the years wore on, the region played an increasingly vital role as a corridor between East and West. Huge bazaars for the merchants of the world came into being. And everywhere in these oasis cities rose great mosques. This is the region that the word Saiiki conjures up in our thoughts today. And we must always remember that this Saiiki was not built in a day: it is the product of a long and turbulent history, and the shadow of this history, of the poetry, of the rise and fall of many peoples, hangs over the cities and the mosques, the caravans, the desert itself.

The Uzbeks, under Shaibani Khan, took over mastery of the region from the Timurids, establishing their capital at Samarkand; but the Shaibanid dynasty was not of long duration, and in 1599 gave way to the Janids and then to the Mangits. But Bukhara, their new capital, flourished for many centuries, throughout the long history of the Silk Road, until the fall of the Mangit emirs in 1920.

Today Bukhara not only possesses the most ancient and important remains of all the oasis cities but it also has retained, more than any other, its medieval atmosphere. Until the Russian Revolution, in fact, Bukhara remained a Shaibanid city, and even after the Revolution, although the way of life of the inhabitants was much changed, as a result of which the city itself ought to have been drastically changed as well, a great deal of medieval color was retained—and may still be enjoyed today. Samarkand and Tashkent are fast becoming modern cities, but the inevitable transformation is still a slow process in Bukhara, and we must be grateful for that: walking through the streets of this twentieth-century city of mud houses, we may still form an impression of what a medieval Central Asian oasis town was like.

The Bukhara of the khans was a mecca for Mohammedans of the whole region; to it came pilgrims from all over Central Asia as well as Moslem scholars who desired to study at the madrasahs. Further, Bukhara was one of the chief towns of the Silk Road as it crossed Central Asia, and Bukhara's bazaar is thought to have been the largest

in the entire region. Its size is hard to estimate today with any accuracy; in older days, the shops within the precincts of the bazaar were said to have continued for many miles.

Both an important religious and commercial center, Bukhara was enclosed by high walls that were pierced by eleven gates. The walls themselves were over thirty feet high, and still higher brick towers stood on either side of the eleven gates. These were iron plated, with huge locks, and stood twelve feet high and almost twenty feet wide. From the eleven gates ran streets so narrow that a loaded camel could only with difficulty pass a two-wheeled cart.

Within the great walls, not in the center of the city but near the Uglon Gate, rose the inner castle where the khans of Bukhara dwelt. It was enclosed by its own wall, which was pierced by only one gate, and it stood atop a man-made hill. All visitors to the castle had to climb this high and barren hill, which was ungraced by trees or shrubbery. Within the walls of the inner castle were crammed not only the palace of the khan but also the mint, the treasury, and the royal mosque.

A line drawn between the Samarkand Gate and the Sallokh Khon Gate divided the town into two sections, each of which was further divided into six subsections. Controlling each of these was a kind of superintendent who had under him an assistant and several policemen. Headquarters for the superintendents stood near the Rigistan and the Devon Begi, a municipal water reservoir.

With the coming of darkness Bukhara turned into what we would call a ghost town: the bazaar was shut, people were locked into their houses, streets were deserted, and by seven o'clock all the eleven great gates of the city were closed against the outside world. The only people allowed abroad were midwives and doctors, and to enforce this curfew there were regular patrols who beat drums and triangles as they moved through the silent streets. Anyone found violating the curfew, even a high official of the government, was set to the task of helping to clean the municipal bathhouse before he was allowed to return home. How revealing it would be if we could find a list of those who were stopped in the streets, telling us, along with their names, the kind of work they did and how old they were!

We must not suppose that this curfew was the result of a deliberate policy of repression on the part of the rulers of the city. No, it was generally agreed by everyone that only criminals walked abroad at night; those who were faithful to the teachings of the Prophet went to sleep with the coming of darkness. And so, within its gigantic walls, its huge gates tightly locked, the city opens only at the top, looking up into the frighteningly high, deep black sky studded with stars that gleamed with the cold brilliance of a desert night.

The fact that the city retired so early meant that it had all that extra, pent-up energy to expend during the day. And the day begins early: at five o'clock all eleven gates are flung open, and in rush camels, donkeys, and two-wheeled carts. Each of the long streets of the city is suddenly filled with men whose skins and eyes are differently colored, men who buzz about like the residents of a disturbed beehive. It is all energy. Every street, we find, specializes in some particular item and never intrudes on the specialty of other streets; things from all over the world are on sale—shoes and clothes, ancient swords (such as those used by the crusaders) and precious stones of all sorts, grain from everywhere; Indian rupees, Mexican pesos, Turkish lire, British pounds, silver coins of ancient Persia, coins from Parthia and Arabia.

Now suddenly the crowds part and the merchants stand motionless as an old man wearing a snow-white turban rides slowly by on a horse or a camel; he is followed by nine young men carrying sticks. The old man is a Rais-ush-shariat, going through the city to make sure that no Mohammedan law is being transgressed. The traders tremble, wondering if today their goods are to be inspected. Here and there merchants are led away, women and men both; taken to a nearby square, they are stripped and then beaten with a stick by one of the younger men, while another man counts the number of strokes that are to be administered. A shouting crowd surrounds the spectacle.

Old age is venerated. Many of the town's "senior citizens," as we might call them today, sit quietly on benches around the pond near the bazaar, gossiping their last years away. (Here, as in other oasis cities, there are a number of pools and ponds as well as large reservoirs.) There, beside one of the pools, shaded by trees, the old men exchange

reminiscences. Now and then, falling silent, they look up to the tops of the trees, where storks have built their nests, and now and then they are rewarded with the strange, statuesque profile of a bird standing on one leg. Storks' nests are not confined, of course, to treetops, but may be found atop towers and other high buildings.

A group of pilgrims passes, murmuring in chorus the sacred words, "*"Doni ki chist davlat. . . .*" "What is happiness? Do you know? Happiness is seeing the face of a friend and, in his presence, giving to the poor before giving to the king."

The city has three hundred sixty mosques. Several times a day, at prescribed hours, rise the voices of the muezzins from the tops of minarets calling the faithful to prayer. When the time to pray arrives, the bazaar quickly empties: men and women, old and young, merchant or thief—all vanish into a nearby mosque. Then, in twenty minutes or so, the bazaar echoes once again with bustling, clamoring crowds. Negotiations recommence between traders and prospective customers: "Come down a little in your price." "Impossible, I can't make it any cheaper. . . ."

My rather free recreation of ancient Bukhara is based largely on an article by the Central Asian historian, A. Semyonov, called "Bukhara of the Past" and published in a book of memoirs by Sadrinin Aini, the father of modern Tajik literature.

In present-day Bukhara there are still to be seen relics of the khan era, of the royal palace, of old mosques, of the pools and reservoirs beside which the old men gossiped. There are remains also of the old caravan market (now called the gem market) as well as of the nearby hostelry for men and beasts. But what has come down to us in almost mint condition from ancient Bukhara is the atmosphere of a medieval town itself, dark and indescribably serene. As I walked through the town the evening of my arrival, I saw the storks nesting as they have always done in the tops of trees and towers and mosques; and I continued walking after darkness had fallen (once so strictly forbidden), and I saw how quickly the narrow streets emptied of people—I passed a straggler or two, but otherwise the Bukhara night was as dead as it must have been centuries ago. Earlier, I entered a mosque, thinking it

was an archaeological site, but found that it was full of old men and still in use. As I came out, I looked up at the tower tiled in that bewitching blue, and it seemed to me that the blue of the minarets of Bukhara is lovelier than that of other oasis cities, just as the distant enchantment of the middle ages seems more immediate here than elsewhere.

II

With the death of Tamerlane, his empire was afflicted repeatedly by internal conflict until, thus gradually weakened, it fell at last into the hands of Uzbeks from the north. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, nearly the entire area once controlled by the Timurids had come under Shaibanid domination. Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand became the capitals of three Shaibanid kingdoms, into which all of West Turkistan had been divided. This transition, from the collapse of the Timurids to the era of the three kingdoms, was neither swift nor painless: the drums of war reverberated unceasingly in the deserts of Kyzyl-kum and Kara-kum and along the banks of the Amu Darya and the Sir Darya.

Shaibani was born into a family descended from Juchi, Genghis Khan's oldest son. All the conquerors of Central Asia, it will be noted, after the time of Genghis Khan, sought to prove a blood relation with the great conqueror, hoping to derive from it the protection of his name as well as the self-confidence it inspired and the trust of the desert dwellers. Tamerlane had also termed himself a descendent of Genghis Khan, and in fact had had that claim chiseled on his tombstone—although it is generally accepted that he came from a Turkish tribe.

In the case of Shaibani Khan, who took over mastery of the desert from the Timurids, it seems safe to say that the blood of Genghis Khan did actually flow through his veins. An incomparable military strategist, he subjugated all of West Turkistan before the rest of the world had become aware of it, pouring into the process his apparently inexhaust-

ible energy. Born in 1451, he was a little past fifty by the time he had made Samarkand his capital.

But he was not destined to enjoy a peaceful reign. Out of the south came a foe of immense strength, Shah Ismail of Persia, and in a battle fought between the two near Merb in the autumn of 1510 Shaibani Khan was slain. With his death, the whole land around the lower reaches of the Amu Darya passed into the hands of Ismail. Within a year, however, Ilbars, successor of Shaibani, had gained the support of the people and had succeeded in making the land independent of Persian rule. He founded the royal dynasty of Khiva, which, for the next three and one-half centuries, was to rule the lower Amu Darya. The capital was first established at Urgench, but under the twelfth monarch, Arb Muhammad, it was transferred to Khiva. The dynasty came to an end only at the close of the nineteenth century, when the land became part of Russia.

Watered by the Amu Darya, Khiva is a solitary green island surrounded by the vast expanse of the desert. Even today, travelers coming from Samarkand and Bukhara in the more fertile region of the Zaraf-shan are struck by the barren desolation of the land around Khiva. This impression is due in large part to the immense size of the desert that surrounds the oasis of Khiva as well as to the utter dependence of the oasis on the erratic, wandering Amu Darya.

The most remarkable man to appear in those three and one-half centuries was Abu'l-Ghazi, ruler and historian, author of *Genealogy of the Turks*. Son of that Arb Muhammad Khan who moved the capital to Khiva, Abu'l-Ghazi was born at Urgench in August, 1603. His life was not destined to be tranquil. His first personal sorrow came at the early age of seven with the death of his mother, a descendant of Genghis Khan. As he grew older, he became involved in the internecine struggles that plagued his family, as they did all desert dynasties of the time. When he was eighteen, the family divided into two powerful factions: Abu'l-Ghazi's father and brother on one side, his half-brothers on the other. In 1621 the two opposing forces met, and the side to which Abu'l-Ghazi had adhered was defeated. As a result, his family was

scattered: his father was imprisoned, his brother sought refuge with the shah of Persia, and Abu'l-Ghazi himself fled to Bukhara.

Ten years later, his brother, Isfandiyar, returned and, in another engagement, defeated his half-brothers and assumed the sovereignty. For this occasion Abu'l-Ghazi returned from Bukhara and was appointed lord of Urgench, the old capital. But now the wheel turned again, and this time the two brothers were doomed to battle; Abu'l-Ghazi had the support of the Uzbek while his brother, Isfandiyar, had the Turkomans on his side. When the two armies met, Isfandiyar emerged victorious, whereupon Abu'l-Ghazi was sent as a hostage to Persia and there spent another decade of his life in confinement. As a result of those long, empty years, a historian was born: having nothing else to do, Abu'l-Ghazi began to study the history of his people and their land.

In the summer of 1639 he managed to escape from his Persian prison and two years later reached Urgench. There he found himself supported once again by the Uzbeks and once again obliged to engage his brother Isfandiyar in a battle for mastery; it was not merely a quarrel between brothers but also a quarrel between peoples, the Uzbeks and the Turkomans. For the first time in his life, destiny favored Abu'l-Ghazi, who was then around forty years old: his brother died before the decisive battle could be fought.

Abu'l-Ghazi assumed the crown of Khiva in 1645 and reigned for the next eighteen years, during which time he subjugated the Turkomans, made expeditions to Bukhara, and greatly encouraged scholarship within his kingdom. In 1663 he abdicated the throne in favor of his son, and in March of the following year he died. It has been said of him that from his youth onwards he was driven by a tremendous lust for power and fame and that he possessed an extraordinary military and political talent. He said of himself: "I was thoroughly conversant with three fields of endeavor: war, poetry, and history." It is safe to say, whatever else one may choose to say about him, that under his reign Khiva flourished as center of culture and commerce as never before or since. Within the last century, his *Genealogy of the Turks* has been translated into both French and Russian.

In 1717, fifty-three years after his death, the city was alerted by a courier to an unexpected threat: three thousand Russian troops, equipped with the most modern weapons, were marching against Khiva at the order of Peter the Great. This expeditionary force was commanded by Bekovich Cherkatski. Fortunately for the oasis city, the warning had come in time. The inhabitants mustered an army, which crept out silently by night and fell upon the Russians, inflicting a total defeat. The commander was stripped and beheaded; knowing this, we have little difficulty imagining how his men were treated. Only a very few escaped to return to Mother Russia, and Peter never sent another expeditionary force to the desert country on the lower Amu Darya.

But in 1873, after flourishing for another one hundred fifty years as a caravan city, Khiva was once again attacked by a Russian army—this one under the command of General Kaufmann—and was unable to withstand the invading force. After a disastrous defeat, Khiva became a Russian tributary. In 1920, after the revolution, the last khan was forced to abdicate when all of Khorezm became part of the Soviet republics; and thus the kingdom of the khans of Khiva ceased to exist in name as well as in fact.

Today work is being undertaken to repair and preserve Khiva's inner castle. When I visited it, the time was the latter part of May—and the temperature that day was about a hundred degrees Fahrenheit. When I complained, my driver told me that the day before it had been over a hundred!

Khiva was the strangest of all the oasis cities of West Turkistan that I visited. Both within and without the citadel walls, white mud houses stood crammed together, the only difference being that inside the now crumbling walls stood such large buildings as the royal palace itself, a mosque, and a monastery, while on the outside the houses were small. But now they are all in a ruinous state, and virtually the only movement to be seen was that of the workmen engaged in restoring the ruins.

By that I do not mean that the houses were wholly uninhabited: a small number of people (who soon were scheduled to be moved outside the walls) still lived in the small mud huts. Every now and then a

woman dressed in heavy clothes and wholly veiled would glide out of one of the houses and move like a mirage down the silent, narrow streets under the glaring desert sun.

The ruins of the caravan market (now merely a street of the town), together with a hostel for men and a field for beasts, have been more perfectly preserved than those of Bukhara. As I walked across the deserted field, I tried to conjure up a picture of merchants from all over Asia doing business together, each speaking his own language and trying to understand the other—but I found it almost impossible. In this sense it was quite unlike Bukhara, where, standing in the gem market, I had no difficulty picturing the bustle and noise that attended the transaction of business in that thriving caravan city.

In the athletic field of the madrasah, which was paved with bricks, I saw in the center a strange-looking object shaped rather like an enormous rice bowl laid upside down. I found its entrance, descended a spiral staircase, and came upon a fountain at the bottom—or rather, to be more exact, upon the remains of a fountain. Some water was still there, to be sure, but it did not seem fresh like spring water. Once scholars of the madrasah as well as townsfolk came here to draw water, and all day long there were lines of people waiting to fill their leather bags—but that, too, seemed a mirage in this empty, desolate place.

Vambéry's nineteenth-century travel diary describes a group of foreign prisoners being cruelly punished in the square in front of the royal palace, but here again, although I stood in the very same square, I could in no way recapture the scene, although it occured but a scant century ago. As one wanders through the forsaken ruins of Khiva, one begins to wonder if its long history might not also be a mirage.

III

Compared with Khiva and Bukhara, Kokand in the Farghana basin appears rather late as the seat of a hereditary line of khans. Yet it is these three cities that effectively partitioned West Turkistan and gave

the Era of the Three Khans its name. The Farghana basin, the reader will recall, was once the land of Ta Wan, where long ago the Han army came to seek those famous blood-sweating horses, but after that affair came to an end, the harsh white glare of history did not beat down on Farghana again until the early eighteenth century.

It was then that Shah Lukh of Uzbek began the construction of a fortified castle at the site of Kokand in the Farghana basin, country that had once been within the dominion of Bukhara. Subsequently, freeing itself from that dominion and becoming the seat of an independent government, the influence of Kokand gradually widened. Although it was established later, its military and economic might was certainly not inferior to, and perhaps was greater than, that of the other two khan nations. One reason for this was that during their days of great prosperity, Kokand had utilized its position on the Chinese border, and within the protective bosom of Tien-shan, to monopolize the China trade. Not only Kokand, the capital, but also lesser cities, such as Andijan, Margilan, and Namangan, flourished as stations on the Silk Road, and merchants of Kokand and Andijan, in particular, were well known in distant countries.

Before we go on to examine the prosperity of Kokand and Andijan, we must pause for a moment to consider a famous hero who was born in the Farghana basin around the time of the collapse of the Timurids: Babur, founder of the Mogul Empire of India. This was the government that represented India between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries and that achieved, for a time, so high a degree of culture and civilization that it more than deserved the name of empire.

In 1483, just over twenty years before the fall of the Timurid dynasty, a son was born at Andijan to Omar Shaikh Mirza, sultan of Farghana. Named Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, the boy was a fifth-generation descendant of the mighty Tamerlane. His childhood was spent amid an endless series of dynastic squabbles among the lords of Central Asia, and when he was seventeen the critical battle was fought between the Timurids and Shaibani Khan of Uzbek, out of which Shaibani emerged victorious. The gates of Samarkand were opened to him, marking the beginning of the end of the dynasty founded by Tamerlane.

After the army of Shaibani Khan had entered Samarkand, the inhabitants of the city began to plot against their new masters, using as the spearhead of their rebellion Abu'l-Makarim, who was the religious leader of the city. Babur, summoned from Andijan, was welcomed to Samarkand by the rebels as their future lord if the rebellion succeeded. Carefully planned, it did in fact succeed. One night a loud cry was heard, a military drum was sounded, and the six hundred members of the Shaibani garrison were killed.

Yet it was a short-lived victory. Within ten days, Shaibani Khan had sent a new army to Samarkand with orders not to give battle but to lay the castle under continuous siege, calculating that the food supply would soon be exhausted. Within four months many men were dead and others lay dying of starvation; Babur had no choice but to flee, accompanied by only a few personal attendants. Samarkand was again in the hands of Shaibani Khan. Thus began the series of battles that was to fill a large part of Babur's life, for he and Shaibani were engaged in a bitter struggle for possession of the Timurid empire. Twice more Babur gained control of Samarkand and twice more was forced to relinquish it to his enemies.

In fact, Babur might have thanked his lucky stars that he had been unable to subjugate the land between the rivers. As early as 1504 he had already taken Kabul, thus paving the way for his future conquest of India. Having consolidated his position at Ghazni and Bataf Shan, he occupied Punjab in December, 1525; in April of the following year he toppled the Lodi dynasty of Delhi at Panipat; he then proceeded to occupy Delhi and Agra; and the following year he defeated the allied Rajputs under Rana Sanga at Sikri. Historians have sought to explain Babur's phenomenal successes in so short a time through his use of guns, through his drawing on the experience provided by his past failures, and through the lack of cohesion among the rulers of India.

What chiefly interests us here, beyond the fact that Babur was a military genius, is that he was also a highly gifted writer of both poetry and prose. His autobiography, *Baburnama* (which has been translated into a number of modern languages), tells us the story of his life from 1494 through the Indian conquest in 1526. The three chapters on

Farghana, Kabul, and Hindustan provide us with a chronological record of the chief events that occured during those years. Of his birthplace he gives us the following description:

> There are seven towns in Farghana, of which five are to be found on the south bank of the Sir Darya and two on the north bank. One of the towns on the southern shore is Andijan, the capital of Farghana. Among its many products are barley and fruit—musk-melons, grapes, and so on; the pears of Andijan cannot be excelled. . . . In the land between the Amu Darya and the Sir Darya, Andijan is surpassed in size only by Samarkand and Hojairigal. The walls have three gates and are encircled by a moat, from which nine aqueducts bring water into the city.
>
> The people of Andijan are all Turkish, and they speak Turkish. The poet Ali Shir Nevayi was brought up at Herat, and he also received his education at Herat, but his works are written in the language of this country. The air of Andijan is extremely damp, and many people fall ill of fever at the beginning of autumn.

Today the *Baburnama* is considered to be not only the best but virtually the sole source on the history of Farghana at this time. As a poet, Babur has left us the following:

> How much time has passed
> Since I lost my own beloved land?
> My heart has known
> No rest since then.
> What rest could there be
> Living apart from my native land?
> I came to this land
> Of my own will,
> But to my native land I cannot return
> Of my own will.

Babur died in 1530.

Andijan, the remembrance of which had been a source of sorrow to Babur throughout his life, is described also in the Central Asian chron-

icles of Ch'un-yüan (published in 1777), the earliest record of the region known after that of Babur. The chronicle refers to the prosperous days of Farghana when it was under the rule of the khans of Kokand:

> Andijan is a Mohammedan village. The largest city in the country is Kokand, which contains some thirty thousand houses and the palace of the khan himself. Next in size is Margilan, with around twenty thousand dwellings, and this is followed by Namangan, which possesses about ten thousand houses. Of them all the smallest is Andijan, with a mere thousand houses. In 1758 the inhabitants of all four cities came under Chinese domination. . . . There are pools, houses, villages, and fields; people live on their agricultural produce, growing barley and melons. Their peaches are famous for their excellence. There is pasture for oxen and horses. The people do not let their hair grow long down their backs, and they are forbidden to eat wild boar.
>
> The merchants of Andijan in the province of Sinkiang spend years traveling about peddling their merchandise, which they carry piled high on their backs, and they do not return until they have made a large profit, having passed through heavy snows and many other perils. For this reason the peoples of the land call them the Andijan Moslems; and the Moslems of each city call themselves Kashgar Moslems when they travel abroad, and so they are regarded.
>
> Andijan and Kashmir are the homelands of the so-called Central Asian merchants. These merchants are famous for their greed and their parsimony: this has become their second nature. When they travel through Sinkiang, they always live in the Mohammedan quarter. The peoples of the land hate to think of their departure, for then the goods they sell are no longer in circulation, and the people find themselves short of the things they need.

During Babur's life, Andijan was the largest fortified city in the Farghana basin, but by the time of Ch'un-yüan's chronicle it had become the smallest of the four. Its merchants, nonetheless, crossed over Tien-shan to get to the old province of Sinkiang, where they did good

business at the oasis cities on the rim of the Takla-makan Desert; and this was true not only of the merchants of Andijan but also of those from the capital, Kokand, who were known as the merchants of Central Asia. They visited Ili, Kashgar, Yarkand, Hotan, and Kucha, all on the other side of Tien-shan, and they did not return, as we note from the chronicle, until they had made a handsome profit; after they left, the people of the land suffered shortages. To the dwellers of the oases of Takla-makan, these shrewd merchants of Central Asia sold oxen and horses, furs and precious stones; and they bought in return tea and silk, which they then proceeded to sell to the people of the far western countries.

Between ten and fifteen thousand Central Asian merchants are thought to have been living at Kashgar and Ili at that time; thus the Tien-shan pass, on the road from Andijan to Kashgar, must have seen more caravans than ever before in its history. Kokand had not only won a monopoly of the Central Asian trade but its merchants were also making an enormous profit by selling eastern goods to Bukhara in the west and also to both Russia and India, which were then growing interested. Ch'un-yüan's record describes Kokand in the following terms:

> The land has many advantages, and whatever deficiencies it has it makes up for. Several thousand *li* in size, it has splendid castles and pools and many well-to-do houses. Its climate is burning hot, with considerable rain.
>
> There are many strange flowers and fruits. The people mine gold, silver, lead, iron, and tin; they also have diamonds and other precious stones; they grow pine, bamboo, and fir.
>
> They are a lewd people, without public morality. The population consists of many different races: in this they resemble the Moslems of Sinkiang.
>
> Kokand is a large country and also one of the most unsettled in Sinkiang. The many mixed races cheat one another, they are self-seeking, and they never cease fighting for the throne.

A hundred years after the publication of this record, in 1777, the

Japanese minister to Russia, Tokujirō Nishi, was recalled, but before returning to Japan he journeyed into Central Asia. From the account of his travels we may see how greatly Kokand had changed within that single century:

> Kokand was the capital of the khans who once ruled Farghana and Tashkent. In 1875 the country was defeated and fell into the possession of Russia, which since that time has made Kokand the capital of the region; the administrator maintains his office there. The ancient palace of the khans of Kokand is to be found in the center of the town; it is surrounded by brick walls, with spacious gardens. The inner palace consists of several buildings, part wood and part brick, all connected by long corridors. Many of the windows are stained glass, and some of the rooms are extremely lavishly decorated, as, for example, as an alabaster bath. Now the palace is a Russian arsenal, the garden has been allowed to run to seed, and there is nothing to be seen.
>
> In ancient times Kokand was famous throughout Central Asia for its wealth, and even today it has no equal in the beauty of its gold and jewels, in the harmony of its stringed music, or in the skill of its singers and dancing girls. What is strange is that within five years of the fall of the nation, its palace, even including the lovely retiring rooms for the ladies, has been transformed wholly into an arsenal; here and there are heaps of old weapons and shells. Seeing this, the townsfolk are moved to sorrowful reminiscences; but the streets of the city show no trace of the recent war; and as Kokand is as prosperous as it ever was, no one appears to bear a grudge against the Russian conquerors.

Ninety years later I was in the Farghana basin, and I visited both Kokand and Andijan. The basin is now watered by several canals, and the ancient land of Ta Wan has been transformed into a handsome cotton field. With a history that stretches back to before the Christian era, Kokand, Margilan, and Andijan are still the chief cities of the basin and are speeding up their modernization process with all the energy that characterizes the people of Uzbekistan.

Near Margilan there is a famous silk-producing *kolkhoz*. Thus the silk that the merchants of Kokand once brought across the high passes of Tien-shan has now become one of the chief products of the basin. In the museum at Andijan I saw a recently excavated wine jar that was so wide two people with arms outstretched could barely encircle it. As the museum guard pointed out, the jar was a good indication that the people of the basin once produced wine aplenty, but nowhere today did I see a grapevine growing. And the famous horses that once pastured here have all disappeared.

I found both Andijan and Kokand to be quiet, rather gloomy cities, with a large number of shade trees. There, more than anywhere else in West Turkistan, I saw wholly veiled women walking the streets. Moslem customs such as this may well be what has changed least in the basin's long history—for it was in the eighth century that the Arabs successfully invaded the land, bringing with them the tenets of Mohammed.

Across the Roof of Asia

If one were to go from West Turkistan to the Uighur Autonomous Region of present-day Sinkiang, one would have to cross either Tien-shan or the Pamirs, just as caravans did in the past, following the thin but continuous Silk Road that wound like a ribbon through the harsh mountains, dipping into the valleys, stretching across the high passes. The phrase "Silk Road" was used for the first time by the German geologist, von Lichthofen, and came to be applied to the entire caravan route because of the paramount role played by silk throughout the history of East-West commerce.

The road from West to East Turkistan challenged the fastnesses of Tien-shan and the Pamirs, as we have already noted, at two points: near Issik Kol in Kirghizia and at Andijan in Uzbekistan. The caravan routes from the distant western desert met at Samarkand and Bukhara. There one route entered Kirghizia and then from near Issik Kol followed a pass across Tien-shan; the other route entered the Farghana basin and then from the province of Andijan crossed the northern edge of the Pamirs.

Tamerlane's army followed the Issik Kol road on three separate occasions—in 1375, 1383, and 1390. On the first of these the army used the Santash Pass, where—so the story goes—every soldier was told to pick up a small stone and lay it down as he crossed the pass. Soon a huge mound of stones rose there; to the marching soldiers it may have looked like their communal tombstone, for they had no idea, as they entered that vast, unknown country, whether they would ever return. But return they did, after several years—and on that oc-

casion each was told to pick up a stone from the pile to carry back to Samarkand. After this was done, a small mound of stones still remained —one for every man that had perished on the expedition. That is how Santash, which means "counted stones," got its name—and if the story is not true, there is surely a great deal of truth in it, for it coincides with our conception of the kind of men who composed the expeditionary force of Tamerlane.

Hsüan-ts'ang preferred the southern route down from Tien-shan to Issik Kol, crossing Mount Ling, a spur of Tien-shan. It is now commonly supposed that Mount Ling is the present-day Bedel Pass; and it is further supposed that Wei Chieh, who was sent into Central Asia by Sui a little before Hsüan-ts'ang, also used this pass. Much, much later, it served the nineteenth-century explorer, Prejevalsky, who records that although the pass may now and then be closed by snow, it has never been closed the year around. Chokan Valikhanov, a foresighted Kazakh scholar, used the Zhyk Pass to get from Issik Kol to Kashgar. Thus, it may be seen that although many travelers began their journey at Issik Kol, they used different routes to get across the mountains, depending on their ultimate destination; caravans used different routes at different periods in history.

The same is true of crossings that began in Andijan province. This was the road used by the huge Han armies, commanded by General Li Kuang-li, when in the distant past they marched on Ta Wan. They may have entered the craggy Pamirs from Kashgar, passing through Uzgen and Osh before descending into the Farghana basin. This too, it goes without saying, was an important caravan route and the one most generally used by the busy Central Asian merchants of Kokand.

Going from Tashkent to Frunze, I flew over a section of Tien-shan, and again, going from Samarkand to Dushembe, capital of Tajikistan, I flew across the Pamirs. These towering ice-capped rocks, with their perpetual glaciers, are often referred to as "the roof of Asia," yet despite their inhospitality to man, man long ago accepted the challenge and successfully met it. Thousands of years before silk gave its name to the ribbon-thin roads, human beings, refusing to be daunted even by

barriers so formidable as Tien-shan and the Pamirs, moved back and forth between east and west.

While at Dushembe, I accepted the challenge of a Tajik youth to go and see the snowcapped mountains. With some other people, I drove along the bank of the Warsob River on a road that was paved for a time, but where the river became narrower, the paving came to an end. As we continued further, the river tumbled through a rocky gorge—and in the far distance we began to see the high mountains. It was a spur of the Pamirs, the Zarafshan range, on the other side of which was the Anzob Pass that led to Samarkand.

We climbed a bit further and then had to stop because falling stones made the road ahead too dangerous. As we climbed out of the car, we saw an old man herding a flock of mountain goats and sheep. We stood for a long time at this entrance to the Pamirs, looking up at the mighty peaks, awed into silence. And then I considered how there must be countless man-made, snow-covered paths crossing these seemingly inaccessible peaks; and I decided that although the peaks themselves were grand, the will of man, who had successfully met their challenge, was grander still.

Little remains to tell us of the immensely varied lives of the people, as one dynasty rose to power and then fell, as one city flourished before yielding to another. I have paraphrased, in my own words, the few documents that have come down to us, but who can recount the tales of joy and sorrow that were enacted during those long centuries from before the beginning of the Christian era until the present day? The love affairs, the leave-takings, the family reunions—all of them acted out on stages high on the crests of Tien-shan, or deep in a Kyzyl-kum oasis, or along the banks of the Sir Darya and the Amu Darya. The towering waves of history have engulfed the little human dramas, leaving nothing behind.

Near Sha Chou, in the province of Kansu of present-day China, lies Tun-huang, a border town of the past. Nearby stands a watch tower, where, in 1907, there was discovered a letter written by a young girl of Samarkand to her mother, early in the fourth century. It is only a fragment of a short note, but out of the ancient Sogdian words there

rises a vivid picture of a gentle young girl plaintively expressing her sorrow at the distance that separates her from her mother. We know nothing about her; we only know that, living in a distant and alien land, she wrote a homesick letter to her mother who dwelt beyond Tien-shan and the Takla-makan Desert. We do not even know if the letter ever reached the mother. Probably not—since it was found buried in the sand.

Then there came a study made by a Russian philologist of a small village buried from the world in a crest of the Pamirs, the Yaghnob ravine north of Dushembe. As the Sogdians had long since vanished as a people from the face of the earth, so it had always been supposed that no one any longer existed who spoke their language, but there, in that remote Pamir village, the philologist found people who still employed Sogdian as their daily language, a language that should have been dead centuries ago. Nothing is known about them, about their history or how they came to be living there; they themselves do not know. All we know is that there they live, speaking a recognizable version of a long-dead tongue.

Zuishō Tachibana, a member of the Ōtani Expedition Group, who only recently died, was investigating the ruins of an ancient citadel at Kao Ch'ang near Turfan, in East Turkistan, when he discovered some ten mummies. All the bodies, men and women both, were dressed in silk; their faces were covered with cotton cloths; and their shoes were made of leather, with Uighur letters in one of the socks. In the mouths of the dead, pearls were found—perhaps all that was left of the decoration that was placed there after death.

The bodies had not been subjected to a formal process of mummification: it was the climate of the region, characterized by a high temperature, dry sand, and virtually no rain, that had preserved the bodies through the centuries. According to the published report, "On the Mummies Discovered in Central Asia" by Dr. Kenji Kiyono, the bone structure indicates that the bodies were those of Chinese—and so the mummies of people sent to Kao Ch'ang just after it had become a Chinese colony reappear in the world after the lapse of a thousand years. Who were those ten? No one knows. Perhaps they were members

of families sent out to the frontier; perhaps they were members of royal or noble families brought there as hostages. No one knows. All we know is that there they died, along the northern route of Tien-shan, and that the climate has preserved them for us to see a thousand years later.

The seventh-century wall paintings of Afrashab, the remains of the Sogdians that came to light in the ruins of Pyanjikent, the excavations of ancient Khorezm in Kyzyl-kum—these tell us many things, yet few of the things they tell us are clear, they are all swathed in the deep, mysterious darkness of the past.

It is always to be expected, in the history of any people or any nation, that the unknown will always outweigh the known many times, but in Central Asia the endless movement and change of peoples, the constant destruction and reconstruction of the cities, and the special geographical conditions imposed by the simple fact of the desert have made the darkness more mysterious—and the dreams deeper. This mystery has enticed many an explorer, many an archaeologist and historian into Central Asia—men like S.A. Heddin, P. Pelliot, A. von Le Coq, A. Grünwedel, and P.K. Kozlov—and if it has also enticed a mere novelist like me, that is because I believe that once in a while a vivid, five-colored rainbow flashes across the dark, the unknown land. And I most fervently hope that some day I shall be able not only to revisit Turkistan of the West but also—and for the first time—to visit Turkistan of the East, that fabled land that surrounds the desert of Takla-makan.

Aral Sea

Kyzyl-kum Desert

Syr Darya

Urgench

Khiva

Amu Darya

Kara-kum Desert

Zarafshan

Bukhara

Samarkand

Chardzhou

Ashkabad

Mary

IRAN

AFGHANISTAN

S.

Lake Balkhash

R.

S. S. R.

Kuldja

Chu

Chu

Alma-ata

Frunze

Tokmak

Ak Beshim

Issik Kol

Prejevalsk

ent

K i r g h i z S. S. R.

Namangan

Andijan

Uzgen

Margilan

Kokand

Kuva

Marhamat

Arawan

Osh

Ferghana

inabad

T i e n

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Takla-makan Desert

Kashgar

zhik S.S.R.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

BLACK SEA

CASPIAN SEA

RED SEA

ARABIAN SEA

BAY OF BENGAL

INDIAN OCEAN

Alexandria

Memphis

Arbil

Hamadan

(Babylon)

Urgench

Bukhara

Samarkand

Tashkent

Kokand

Emer

Karakorum

Hami

Kashgar

Kuldja

Anxi

Khotan

Sian

Neishabur

(Persepolis)

Kabul

Rawalpindi(Taxila)

Kandahar

Multan

Lahore

Gaya

ROUTES TAKEN BY:

Alexander the Great

Hsüan-ts'ang San-tsang

Genghis Khan

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THE AUTHOR: Yasushi Inoue was born in 1907. After graduating from Kyoto University, he worked for the Mainichi Shimbun, one of Japan's four major newspapers. In 1950 he received the Akutagawa Award, Japan's highest literary prize, for his book *Bullfight*. Since then he has devoted himself entirely to writing and has established himself as a leading novelist. Among his many literary prizes are the Art Academy Prize (for *Wall of Ice*) and the Noma Literary Prize (for *Yodo Diary*). His abiding interest in Central Asia has led him to write several novels about this region, including the long-standing bestseller, *Lou-lan*. He is now president of the Japan Writers' Association and lives in Tokyo with his wife and two children.

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The author and his family at the home of Professor Nabi Mukhamedov of the Oriental Institute, Tashkent. Second and third from the left are Mr. and Mrs. Inoue; Mr. and Mrs. Nabi are at the extreme right; and Miss Inoue is next to them.

"Many agree that Yasushi Inoue is not only of Japan's most important contemporary writers but also one of the most 'congenial' to average Western readers."

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